

Traditions of Theology

STUDIES IN

HELLENISTIC THEOLOGY,

ITS BACKGROUND AND AFTERMATH



EDITED BY

DOROTHEA FREDE & ANDRÉ LAKS

TRADITIONS OF THEOLOGY

PHILOSOPHIA ANTIQUA

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FOUNDED BY J.H. WASZINK† AND W.J. VERDENIUS†

EDITED BY

J. MANSFELD, D.T. RUNIA
J.C.M. VAN WINDEN

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DOROTHEA FREDE AND ANDRÉ LAKS (EDS.)

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INTRODUCTION

D. FREDE ET A. LAKS

Le 8e *Symposium Hellenisticum* s'est tenu à la Maison de la Recherche de l'Université Charles de Gaulle-Lille 3, à Villeneuve d'Ascq, les 24–29 Août 1998. Le financement en a été rendu possible grâce à des subventions du CNRS, du Ministère de l'Education nationale, et du Centre de Recherche Philologique de Université de Lille III (composante de l'UMR 8519, "Savoirs et Textes"). Que ces institutions soient vivement remerciées de leur soutien.

Christine Samain, avec sa gentillesse coutumière, s'est occupée du suivi administratifs des dossiers. Elisa Bozzelli a efficacement aidé à l'organisation matérielle du colloque.

Participaient aux travaux: Keimpe Algra (Utrecht), Jean-François Balaudé (Paris), Julia Annas (University of Arizona), Bernard Besnier (ENS Saint-Cloud), Suzanne Bobzien (Oxford), Tad Brennan (Yale), Charles Brittain (Cornell), John Dillon (Dublin), Tiziano Dorandi (CNRS, Paris), Michael Erler (Erlangen), Dorothea Frede (Hambourg), Michael Frede (Oxford), Alain Gigandet (Paris XII), Brad Inwood (Toronto), André Laks (Lille), Carlos Lévy (Paris XII), Antony Long (Berkeley), Dirk Obbink (Oxford), René Piettre (EHESS, Paris), David Runia (Leiden), Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge), David Sedley (Cambridge), Robert Sharples (Londres), Teun Tieleman (Utrecht), Richard Sorabji (Londres), Emidio Spinelli (Rome), Steven White (Austin).

Le présent volume réunit neuf des dix contributions qui furent présentées lors de ces journées. Conformément à une pratique bien établie, elles ont été révisées par les auteurs à la lumière des discussions et de la relecture d'un des participants. Jaap Mansfeld, dans sa fonction de directeur de la collection *Philosophia Antiqua*, a également revu l'ensemble des articles qui lui étaient soumis pour publication. Nous lui en sommes très reconnaissants.

Le relation entre philosophie et théologie, au sein de la tradition occidentale, est loin d'avoir toujours été sereine. Ceci est certaine-

ment vrai du mariage agité entre philosophie ancienne et religion chrétienne. L'image de la philosophie comme "servante de la théologie" était censée régler, au Moyen-Age, le conflit hérité de l'Antiquité tardive et de la tradition arabe. Mais les philosophes furent loin de toujours s'y plier. Selon la spirituelle suggestion de Kant, la servante devait précéder sa maîtresse pour l'éclairer, plutôt que de porter sa traîne ; ce renversement préluait à la séparation des disciplines, qui règne depuis.

Cette querelle de préséance est inconnue en Grèce ancienne. La philosophie apparaît plutôt comme une parente que comme une servante de la théologie. A l'époque archaïque, on ne peut évidemment parler de théologie, conçue en tant que discipline systématique. La vie religieuse s'alimente à une multitude de traditions mythologiques et de cultes qui ne se réfèrent à aucune autorité théologique, texte sacré, ou doctrine arrêtée. Le caractère non théorique de la religion grecque explique que, en dépit de tensions incontestables entre les premiers philosophes d'une part, les croyances et les pratiques de l'autre, le régime fut plutôt celui d'une tolérance mutuelle. Les choses changèrent au Ve siècle, avec la remise en cause des formes de vie traditionnelle de la société grecque et la critique des fondements de la moralité populaire, chez les Sophistes et Socrate.

Ce n'est donc pas par hasard si Platon fut le premier à forger le terme de "théologie" (θεολογία) pour désigner les opinions philosophiquement justifiables à propos des dieux, par opposition à ce qu'il tenait pour des récits moralement nocifs (*R.* 379a). Aristote devait user plus librement du mot "théologien" (θεολόγος) à propos d'auteurs comme Hésiode ou Orphée ; mais c'est aussi lui qui introduisit l'expression θεολογική φιλοσοφία ("la philosophie théologique") pour désigner techniquement la partie de la métaphysique qui s'intéresse aux premiers principes de l'univers. Pourtant, si la "théologie" devait désormais jouer un rôle à part entière au sein de la philosophie, tant en physique qu'en métaphysique, ni Platon, ni Aristote, ni aucun de leurs successeurs ne prétendirent subordonner les croyances communes à l'autorité de la philosophie. Cette attitude ne résulte pas de la simple prudence ou de la précaution. Le désaccord entre les philosophes eux-mêmes était aussi trop grand pour permettre une telle subordination. En absence de toute orthodoxie, les essais de Platon et d'Aristote d'accommoder les croyances ordinaires à leurs positions théoriques non seulement diffèrent entre eux, mais varient d'un ouvrage à l'autre, en fonction du contexte.

A l'époque hellénistique, la discussion des problèmes théologiques devait s'intensifier et se diversifier. Les nouvelles écoles épicuriennes et stoïciennes en partie maintinrent, en partie remirent en question les principes théologiques de leurs prédécesseurs. La même chose vaut pour leur attitude envers la religion commune. Le souci d'attirer des adhérents provenant de toutes les couches de la société explique que les Epicuriens et les Stoïciens aient été encore plus disposés que Platon et Aristote à faire place à la religion traditionnelle dans leurs enseignements. Mais la tentative des nouveaux venus de donner un sens aux croyances communes ne peut pas être traitée comme le simple effet du prosélytisme. Chacune des deux écoles soutenant une philosophie de la nature différente, il leur incombait de rendre compte de ce qu'elles considéraient comme des éléments divins au sein du monde naturel. Les débats théologiques entre philosophies rivales sont par ailleurs caractérisés à l'époque hellénistique par une standardisation des questions posées et des réponses données. Bien que nous ne sachions que très peu de choses sur le développement des écoles au début de la période hellénistique, la compétition à laquelle elles se livraient semble avoir fortement contribué à ce processus. Chaque école se devait de développer une stratégie pour traiter une série de questions-types telles que : "les dieux existent-ils ?", "quelle est leur nature" ? "se préoccupent-ils du monde et comment ?". Bien entendu, ces questions avaient déjà été soulevées par Platon et Aristote. Mais, outre qu'elles gagnèrent alors encore en importance et systématisme, elles atteignirent un nouveau degré de sophistication après le tournant "sceptique" de l'Académie platonicienne. Car, bien que les Académiciens n'aient évidemment pas embrassé l'athéisme, ils critiquèrent rigoureusement la manière dont leurs adversaires dogmatiques justifiaient leurs argumentations théologiques.

Les articles réunis ici ne prétendent pas couvrir la totalité du champ ni même traiter de tous les problèmes majeurs discutés entre les écoles. Le volume reflète plutôt la discussion actuelle sur une série de questions qui n'ont que récemment commencé à recevoir l'attention qu'elles méritent. Etant donné la longue histoire du débat philosophique sur les "choses divines", il n'y a pas dans ce domaine de début nettement marqué à l'époque hellénistique, moins peut-être qu'ailleurs. C'est pourquoi plusieurs contributeurs, comme par un accord tacite, donnent à leur exposé l'époque classique pour toile de fond. Mais tout comme il n'y pas de début à proprement parler, la fin n'est pas non plus fixée, tout au moins de fin qui coïnciderait avec

la fin de ce qu'on appelle traditionnellement "l'époque hellénistique". De fait, beaucoup de problèmes théologiques traités par les philosophes classiques et hellénistiques eurent une longue vie. Ceci explique pourquoi certains des articles excèdent largement les limites du 1^{er} siècle après J.-C. Cet élargissement peut au reste contribuer à assouplir la conception même que nous nous faisons de la période hellénistique, qui, en matière de production intellectuelle peut-être encore plus que dans la perspective de l'histoire politique, comporte une certaine part de convention¹.

Sommaire des contributions

Robert Sharples

Les difficultés que soulèvent le sens et la relation des différents énoncés d'Aristote concernant la ou les première(s) cause(s) de l'univers, en particulier celles qui touchent le "moteur immobile" et sa relation au monde naturel, sont notoires. Elles ont très vite donné lieu à une "histoire de la réception" diversifiée. C'est pourquoi R. Sharples donne à son enquête un cadre large : son parcours des réactions à la théologie d'Aristote couvre le demi millénaire qui s'étend d'Aristote à Alexandre d'Aphrodise et son école. Sharples montre comment différentes tendances se développèrent au sein de la tradition aristotélicienne. Il part de Théophraste, passe en revue les rares témoignages sur la cosmologie aristotélicienne qui précèdent le renouveau de l'aristotélisme au I^{er} siècle avant J.-C. Si la renaissance donne lieu à un traitement plus rigoureux des textes

¹ Quand G. Droysen introduisit la notion, elle avait pour fonction de réhabiliter, contre les imputations de décadence, le mouvement d'expansion de la culture grecque vers l'Orient qui commence avec les Ptolémées, et débouche sur la rencontre avec l'Orient et le Christianisme. Les historiens actuels plaident aussi parfois contre la périodisation étroite, qui situe la fin de la période hellénistique avec la bataille d'Actium (voir par ex. C. Préaux, 'Réflexions sur l'entité hellénistique', *Chronique d'Égypte* 40 (1965), 130s.; H.-J. Gehrke, *Geschichte des Hellenismus*, Munich 1990, 3). Dans l'Epilogue de la *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge 2000), M. Frede, prenant pour critère de la fin de l'époque hellénistique en matière de philosophie la renaissance conjuguée du platonisme et de l'aristotélisme, est amené inversement à considérer une date haute, dès la fin du second siècle avant J.-C. (p. 772, 782) –ce qui ne l'empêche pas de souligner la longue survie des écoles hellénistiques, jusqu'au II^e siècle après J.-C. au moins. Pour l'histoire de la dénomination "hellénistique" dans l'historiographie de la philosophie, on trouvera des éléments d'information dans M. Isnardi-Parente, 'La Genesi del concetto di Filosofia Ellenistica', in: M. I.P., *Filosofia e scienza nel pensiero ellenistico* (Naples 1991), 289–323.

d'Aristote, aucune image canonique de ses doctrines théologiques n'émergea sur le chemin, long et tortueux, des discussions de l'Antiquité tardive. Chaque époque, développant son propre agenda, ouvrit à de nouvelles questions. Le dossier, patiemment instruit, permet d'expliquer pourquoi les différentes approches d'Aristote dans l'Antiquité aussi bien que chez les commentateurs actuels présentent de telles divergences.

David Sedley

La contribution de D. Sedley est l'une de celle qui marque le mieux combien les frontières entre la philosophie "classique" et la philosophie hellénistique sont floues (Sedley parle de "pont"). La thèse est que les antécédents de la doctrine du dieu stoïcien doivent être cherchés dans l'Académie platonicienne de la fin du IV^e siècle av. J. C., et plus précisément chez Polémon, dont Sedley pense que la physique est saisissable. L'importance du *Timée* et de ses interprétations ressort clairement de l'analyse, qui donne aussi lieu à une réévaluation: contrairement à la *communis opinio*, la présentation de la physique académicienne par Antiochus d'Ascalon, dans les *Tusculanes* de Cicéron, doit être considérée comme une source d'information digne de foi.

Dorothea Frede

L'article instruit une comparaison entre la doctrine stoïcienne sur la providence divine (largement tirée du traité de Cicéron *Sur la nature des dieux*) et le modèle platonicien développé dans le dixième livre des *Lois*, à première vue très proche : dans les deux cas, le monde est une œuvre d'art conçue par des puissances omniscientes et omniprésentes, qui se préoccupent du bien-être des hommes. Pourtant, à la différence de Platon, les Stoïciens semblent reconnaître une intervention divine directe en faveur des individus. Une telle intervention n'entre-t-elle pas en conflit avec leur croyance en un ordre du monde rationnel rigoureusement fixé ? L'idée d'une justice spéciale ne serait-elle pas une simple concession à la moralité commune ? La réponse ici avancée est que s'il existe un élément divin providentiel inhérent à toute chose, comme le présuppose le panthéisme téléologique des Stoïciens, alors l'ordre divin n'est pas seulement beaucoup plus finement agencé qu'il ne l'est chez Platon, mais est aussi explicitement tourné vers le bien-être humain, même si l'individu ne comprend pas toujours la raison qui se cache derrière l'ordre divin.

Brad Inwood

Les Stoïciens faisaient de la théologie une partie de la physique — elle en est même le point culminant. B. Inwood illustre cette relation entre physique et théologie sur le cas des *Questions naturelles* de Sénèque, en montrant comment la préoccupation théologique constitue le thème souterrain, et parfois le contexte direct, de la discussion météorologique. La prudence épistémologique dont Sénèque fait preuve à plusieurs reprises prend ainsi un sens nouveau. Indépendamment de la confirmation qu'elle apporte de l'importance systématique de la théologie pour le système stoïcien, la lecture originale qu'Inwood fait d'une oeuvre négligée, dont il propose un parcours d'ensemble, livre par livre, contribue à sa réhabilitation.

Michael Erler

M. Erler cherche moins à établir l'existence d'une continuité entre le thème platonicien de l'assimilation à dieu, dont la formulation classique se lit dans le *Théétète* 176b, et le statut paradigmatique de la divinité épicurienne, qui constitue, pour le philosophe épicurien, "l'idéal de la tranquillité et du plaisir", qu'il ne montre comment le concept de l'ὁμοίωσις θεῶν, tel qu'il est spécifiquement mis en oeuvre dans le *Timée* et les *Lois*, peut servir de toile de fond pour interpréter le proème du cinquième livre de Lucrèce. Le fameux "il fut un dieu, un dieu" (V 8) marque, selon M. Erler, la réussite d'une assimilation qui exploite la possibilité d'une divinisation non seulement de la partie immortelle, mais aussi de la partie mortelle de l'âme, thématisée par les deux textes platoniciens de référence. L'analyse détaillée du passage de Lucrèce permet ainsi de mieux comprendre comment les Epicuriens "remplirent d'un vin nouveau les bouteilles tirées des caves de l'Académie".

Dirk Obbink

Les dieux épicuriens existent-ils dans un espace intercosmique, à titre d'entités discrètes, qui émettent perpétuellement des images ? Ou sont-ils une classe d'entité spéciale, matériellement causée et psychologiquement perpétuée par nos propres processus mentaux ? En faveur de cette seconde version, subjectiviste et plus hétérodoxe, de la théologie épicurienne, D. Obbink allègue le témoignage du *De pietate* de Philodème, et en particulier l'affirmation, énoncée dans le contexte d'une réplique aux accusations d'athéisme lancée contre les Epicuriens, selon laquelle Epicure ne reconnaissait "pas seulement

tous les dieux des Grecs, mais beaucoup d'autres en outre". Donner sens à cette affirmation suppose cependant une clarification de la manière dont Philodème conduit sa critique de la doctrine théologique de la tradition philosophique, et donc une confrontation avec la doxographie parallèle de Cicéron dans le *De natura deorum*. D. Obbink montre comment l'approche philodémienne de l'histoire de la théologie, loin d'être purement négative, est guidée par un programme précis qui permet de clarifier certains points de la doctrine épicurienne. Ce n'est pas seulement le cas pour le problème des modalités d'existence des dieux, mais également de l'assertion selon laquelle les dieux sont causes pour les hommes de bienfaits et de détriments.

Emidio Spinelli

La religion astrale est un aspect essentiel de la théologie platonicienne ; l'astrologie, de manière plus générale, est l'objet d'enjeux théologiques, notamment à travers les débats sur la providence divine. Le livre cinq du traité de Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus mathematicos* (*Contre les savants*), constitue à cet égard un témoin à la fois privilégié et original. Privilégié, parce qu'il constitue le dernier chaînon d'une longue tradition argumentative ; original, parce qu'il minimise délibérément le rôle du concept de "destin" pour se concentrer, en conformité avec la pratique des astrologues eux-mêmes — les "Chaldéens" — sur les questions que pose la détermination de l'horoscope au moment de la naissance. E. Spinelli analyse en détail la structure et les articulations internes de ce traité assez peu lu, afin de dresser la carte des sources utilisées et d'isoler la série des objections proprement pyrrhoniennes dirigées contre les pratiques astrologiques.

John Dillon

Deux formes de dualisme semblent coexister chez Plutarque. Le dualisme modéré, tel qu'il ressort en particulier du traité *Sur le E de Delphes*, oppose un dieu suprême transcendant et immuable à une divinité démiurgique qui laisse place à des puissances mauvaises. Cette conception d'un démiurge sublunaire, qui ne réapparaîtra pas avant l'époque de Jamblique, a des antécédants dans l'ancienne Académie. Elle répond par ailleurs au transdentalisme grandissant de la théologie platonicienne depuis Eudore, qui conduit à l'hypothèse de divinités secondaires, sans qu'il soit besoin d'évoquer les tendances égyptianisantes d'Ammonius, le maître de Plutarque. La

seconde forme de dualisme, représentée par le traité sur *Isis et Osiris*, semble plus radicale, puisqu'elle présuppose deux forces antithétiques, selon un modèle peut-être influencé par le Zoroastrisme. Dillon recommande pourtant de ne pas surévaluer ce schéma. Ici encore, les puissances du mal sont restreintes à la sphère sublunaire, et il n'est pas difficile de retrouver le modèle hiérarchique du *Timée* derrière les mythologèmes égyptiens. En particulier, Seth-Typhon n'est rien d'autre que le principe de désordre déjà postulé par Platon. Dillon en conclut à la consistance de la théologie de Plutarque, qui se situe bien dans le mouvance du Platonisme scolaire contemporain.

David Runia

Philon est notre seule source, en matière de théologie, pour la période qui s'étend entre Cicéron d'une part, Sénèque et Plutarque de l'autre. S'appuyant sur le *De opificio mundi*, Runia cherche à situer le témoignage et l'apport de cet auteur *sui generis*. Les divergences entre la pensée religieuse de Philon et les formes de pensée de la philosophie hellénistique, qu'il connaissait bien, ne sont pas dues à son seul judaïsme. Elles reflètent plutôt le fait que l'épistémologie directe de la philosophie hellénistique a cédé la place à une approche de la théologie tout à la fois moins confiante et plus complexe. On peut affirmer l'existence de Dieu, mais sa nature reste inconnaissable. L'originalité de Philon par rapport à la tradition juive est d'étayer ce point par une argumentation rationnelle. Les énoncés de résonance platonicienne sur l'ineffabilité du Créateur ou des conceptions stoïcisantes sur la toute puissance de l'intellect divin tendent à établir la suprématie de Dieu comme la source absolument transcendante de la Loi divine. Ce souci n'a pas de parallèle dans les sources stoïciennes ou médio-platoniciennes, bien que Philon ait pu être influencé par la renaissance pythagorico-platonicienne à Alexandrie, avec Eudore. Il est en tous cas le témoin d'un changement d'atmosphère, le "début de la fin" de la confiance dans une théologie rationnelle caractéristique de la philosophie hellénistique.

ARISTOTELIAN THEOLOGY AFTER ARISTOTLE¹

R.W. SHARPLES

I will begin with three quotations:

Aristotle in his third book *de Philosophia* creates great confusion ... at one moment he attributes all divinity to intellect; at another he says that the universe itself is a god; then he puts some other god in charge of the world and gives it the role of governing and preserving the movement in the world by a sort of counter-rotation; and then he says that it is the heat of the heaven that is god ... when he wants god to be incorporeal, he deprives him of all sensation and wisdom.

“What,” someone might say, “do you class Aristotle and Epicurus together?” Certainly, as far as the point at issue is concerned. For what is the difference, as far as we are concerned, between banishing the divine outside the world and leaving no association between us and it, or confining the gods inside the world but removing them from earthly affairs? ... For we are looking for a providence that makes a difference to *us*, and he who does not admit *daimones* (δαίμονες) or heroes or the possibility of the survival of souls at all has no share in this.

This outstanding investigator of nature and accurate judge of divine matters places human affairs beneath the very eyes of the gods but leaves them neglected and disregarded, managed by some “nature” and not by god’s reasoning.

The first quotation is from Cicero, in a passage² where the Epicurean Velleius is presented as tendentiously seeking to discredit theories of the gods other than Epicurus’ own.³ The second and third quotations

¹ Versions of this paper have been delivered at Edinburgh, as an A.E. Taylor Lecture; at Gothenburg; and at the Symposium Hellenisticum in Lille. I am grateful to all those who have contributed helpful comments: especially to Brad Inwood who read through the penultimate draft, and also to Monika Astszalos, Silke-Petra Bergjan, Enrico Berti, Bernard Besnier, Tad Brennan, Sarah Broadie, John Dillon, Philip van der Eijk, Michael Frede, Mats Furberg, Charles Genequand, Pamela Huby, Tony Long, Jaap Mansfeld, Jan Opsomer, Christopher Rowe, Mary Ruskin, Richard Sorabji and Emidio Spinelli. Responsibility for the views expressed here, and for any misuse of their advice, of course remains my own.

² Cic. *N.D.* I 33 = Arist. fr. 26 Rose; cf. Cherniss 1944, 592-594.

³ Appeal to Aristotle’s surviving works can give at least some degree of credibility to all the descriptions of Aristotle’s god given by Velleius except the claim that god, being incorporeal, can have no wisdom, this being based on the

are from Atticus,⁴ of all Platonists in antiquity perhaps the most implacably anti-Aristotelian.

There has been no shortage of discussion among modern scholars as to just what Aristotle's own views on god were. I cannot hope to reproduce that whole debate here, let alone develop it further. The identification of certain central questions will here be purely preliminary to consideration of how these are reflected in discussions of Aristotle's views in the subsequent half-millennium. On a strict interpretation of "Hellenistic philosophy" it is indeed only the first three of those five centuries that are strictly relevant. However, interpretations of Aristotle's position from the first two centuries of the Roman Empire reflect those developed in the Hellenistic period; and the views developed by Alexander of Aphrodisias and his school around the turn of the third century A.D., much more fully documented than what had preceded, are developments of, and reactions to, the preceding debate.⁵ Moreover, in terms of the contrast between Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic theology developed by Runia elsewhere in this volume, Alexander's treatment, just because it keeps so closely to the Aristotelian texts and the problems they raise, falls on the "Hellenistic" side of the divide, in spite of its later date.

Recent scholars have rightly supposed that we can trace developments in Aristotle's thought about god and about the heavens from one of his works to another.⁶ The ancients, however, did not consider such developmental hypotheses; their aim was to extract a coherent position from consideration of Aristotle's works. This means that they had a motivation which we do not for reconciling apparently

Epicurean assumption that without sensation there can be no wisdom. Cf. Jaeger 1923/1948, 138-139; Bos 1989, 185-191. (I have throughout used a lower-case initial for "god" in the singular as well as in the plural, to avoid question-begging implications of monotheism where they are not necessarily present in the original Greek texts. I am grateful to Christopher Rowe for raising this point.)

⁴ Fr. 3, 52-57, 71-74 and 81-85 des Places. Cf. Happ 1968, 79-80.

⁵ On the general history of the Peripatetic school in the Hellenistic period see Wehrli, F., 'Der Peripatos bis zum Beginn der römischen Kaiserzeit', in: Flashar, H., ed., *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg: Die Philosophie der Antike*, 3, Basel: Schwabe, 1983, 459-599; in the Imperial period, Moraux 1973, id. 1984, and Gottschalk 1987. I have attempted an overview of the entire period in 'The Peripatetic School', in D.J. Furley, ed., *From Aristotle to Augustine*, London: Routledge 1999 (*Routledge History of Philosophy*, vol. 2), 147-187.

⁶ Cf. Jaeger 1923/1948, especially 342-367; Ross, W.D., *Aristotle's Physics*, Oxford 1936, 94-102; Guthrie 1939, xv-xxxvi; Frede 1971; Kosman 1994. Below, nn. 12, 14, 32.

conflicting claims in different Aristotelian texts.⁷ It also means — fortunately — that questions of Aristotle’s own development are peripheral to our enquiry.

A particular issue here relates to the “exoteric” Aristotelian works which were not incorporated into Andronicus’ canon and are now lost. Their relation, on the issues that concern us here, to the thought of the surviving “esoteric” works has itself been a subject of modern dispute;⁸ this in turn poses a difficulty for our assessment of any relation between changes in interpretations of Aristotelian theology at different periods in antiquity and changes in the accessibility, popularity or canonical status of different Aristotelian texts. The general impression one has, however, is that these played, as far as we can now tell, only a minor role. Some of the developments connected with Alexander of Aphrodisias can be seen as the result of closer and more careful study of the “esoteric” texts; for example, the distinction between the souls of the heavenly spheres and the Unmoved Movers (though that is itself still controversial as interpretation of Aristotle). Others however, such as Alexander’s construction of a revised Aristotelian theory of providence, are more naturally seen as a response to debate with other philosophical schools. And, correspondingly, the distinctive features of discussions of the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods may be due not so much to use of the exoteric rather than the esoteric works — though that remains a possibility we cannot for lack of evidence disprove — as to a lesser emphasis on the need to take account of all relevant passages in Aristotle’s writings in developing an interpretation. There are after all passages in the esoteric works too which suggest a very different position from that (apparently) found in *Metaphysics* Lambda.⁹

⁷ It is true that the tendency of much recent work on this issue since Jaeger has been to look for similarities between different stages in Aristotle’s thought as well as noting differences; cf. e.g. Kosman cited in n. 32 below. It is also true that the desire of ancient interpreters to reconcile different passages is sometimes qualified by a concentration on the immediate exigencies of the particular passage currently under discussion; see below, at nn. 97-98. But neither of these points alters the fact that the goals and approaches of ancient and modern interpreters are in this respect at least fundamentally different.

⁸ Below, nn. 14, 53.

⁹ Below, n. 49. — I am grateful to Brad Inwood for prompting me to think further about the issues in this and the preceding paragraphs.

1. *Aristotle*

For Aristotle the heavens are ensouled.¹⁰ It is true that he does not himself refer to a *soul* of the sphere in setting out his views in *Physics* book eight or in the latter part of *Metaphysics* Lambda.¹¹ But the spheres cannot be moved by intellect alone without appetite, so at least these two soul-faculties must be present in the heavens.¹²

This however raises the question: are the soul of the heaven and the Unmoved Mover different? For *Physics* book eight suggests that the souls of terrestrial animals are, not as Plato thought *self-movers*, but unmoved movers that move the animals' bodies and are thereby moved themselves, though only accidentally.¹³ Might the heavenly Unmoved Mover then be, not a separate, entirely immaterial entity which is the object of the desire of the heaven, but simply the soul of the heaven itself?¹⁴ On the other hand Aristotle himself, in the case of terrestrial animals, also describes the *object of their desire* as an unmoved mover, and their faculty of desire as a *moved mover*,¹⁵ and Theophrastus raises doubts about the Unmoved Mover in a way that

¹⁰ Even though Zeller 1909, 828 n. 5 (in connection with Herminius and Alexander of Aphrodisias) regards the claim that the heavens are ensouled as un-Aristotelian, and Gottschalk 1987, 1159 finds the doctrine "startling." Cf. Guthrie 1939, xxix-xxxv; Jaeger 1923/1948, 300; Nussbaum 1978, 132 n. 29; Judson 1994, 159; Genequand 2001, 7-8. — I am grateful to Bernard Besnier, David Runia and others for discussion of these issues.

¹¹ Λ 6, 1072a2 is a reference to Plato's position.

¹² Cf. perhaps *Metaph.* Λ 5, 1071a2-3; the causes of all substances may be soul (ψυχή) and body (σῶμα), or mind (νοῦς), appetite (ὄρεξις) and body (σῶμα). Alexander, in *Metaph.* fr. 21 p. 98 Freudenthal 1884 = p. 125 Genequand 1984 refers the second option, mind, appetite and body, explicitly to the heavens; cf. Freudenthal 1884, 42. In Aristotle's early dialogue *De Philosophia* it was the heavenly bodies themselves, i.e. the planets and stars, that had souls, while in the later treatises it is rather the spheres carrying these bodies that do so: Jaeger 1923/1948, 300.

¹³ *Ph.* VIII 6, 259b2-3, 16-20; Alexander, *de An.* 21.24, 22.13; Furley 1978.

¹⁴ This may be the position of Aristotle in *de Caelo*: Guthrie 1939, xvii-xxix, Moraux 1963, 1200-1203. The presence of a separate Unmoved Mover both in *de Philosophia* and in *de Caelo* is however argued by Cherniss 1944, 584-590, 594-6. See also Bos, A.P., *Providentia Divina: The theme of divine Pronoia in Plato and Aristotle*, Assen 1976, 24-25; id. 1989, 186, 191-200; and below, nn. 29-30. Sorabji 1997, 205 notes that Arist. *Ph.* VIII 5, 258a7, 258a19 would allow the soul of the heavens to be the unmoved mover; only VIII 10, by arguing that there cannot be an infinite force in a finite magnitude, excludes it. The Unmoved Movers and the sphere-souls were identified by Averroes and Zabarella: Ross 1924, cxxxvi, Berti 1997, 68-69.

¹⁵ Arist. *de An.* III 10, 433b15-17. Cf. also *Ph.* VIII 2, 253a11ff., VIII 6, 259b6-16, with Furley 1978; also Bodnár 1997b, 104 n. 35, Broadie 1993, 391 n. 12.

hardly suggests that Unmoved Mover and sphere-soul were simply to be equated in the doctrine he is discussing.¹⁶

If we identify the Unmoved Mover with the sphere-soul it may seem that this soul will be moved accidentally as its body rotates; but Aristotle expressly says that, unlike the souls of terrestrial animals, the Unmoved Mover must not be moved even accidentally.¹⁷ Kosman suggests that the soul of the outermost heaven is not moved as it rotates, for there is nothing surrounding it to provide it with an Aristotelian place in terms of which it could move.¹⁸ This may seem to prove too much, for by this argument the *body* of the first sphere would not move as it rotates, either.¹⁹ However, that the soul of the outermost sphere is not moved as it rotates is in fact a view canvassed by ancient interpreters.²⁰

Broadie argues that the Unmoved Mover is related to the heavens as a soul to its body, with the two differences that it is not the actuality of an *organic* body or a first as opposed to a second actuality,²¹ and that its activity is explained by its desire for its own act of moving rather than by any external goal.²² On the conventional view, she contends, the Unmoved Mover is a final cause in a different way for itself and for the heavens. In the case of the latter it is an exemplary cause; but it can hardly be an exemplar for itself.²³

¹⁶ Bodnár 1997b, 85 n. 5. Below, n. 57.

¹⁷ *Ph.* VIII 6, 259b24.

¹⁸ Kosman 1994, 146-7.

¹⁹ Judson 1994, 162.

²⁰ Cf. Arist. *Ph.* IV 5, 212a31ff., Eudemus, fr. 80 Wehrli; Sorabji 1988, 193-196; id., 'Theophrastus on place', in Fortenbaugh, W.W. and Sharples, R.W., eds., *Theophrastean Studies*, New Brunswick 1988 (*Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities*, 3), 139-166, at 144-146; Algra, K. *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought*, Leiden 1995, 255-257; Sharples, R.W., 'Eudemus' *Physics*: Change, Place and Time', forthcoming in Fortenbaugh, W.W. and Bodnár, I., eds., *Eudemus of Rhodes*, New Brunswick (*Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities*, 11). Below, nn. 89, 93.

²¹ Broadie 1993, 390, 392-393, 397. The Unmoved Mover is the substance of the sphere (410).

²² Berti 1997, 75-82 distinguishes the Unmoved Movers from the spheres, but — rejecting the notion of imitation as does Broadie — considers the Unmoved Movers themselves, not the spheres, as the subject as well as the object of the desire referred to in *Λ* 7; the Unmoved Movers, he argues, move the heavens as *efficient* causes (below, n. 44) because of their self-directed desire. He cites (81-82) Arist. *Metaph.* *Λ* 10, 1075b10: medicine is in a way health, so that the final cause and what moves for the sake of it are identical. (The implication, not explicitly drawn by Berti, would seem to be that the doctor, *qua* doctor, produces health in patients because he desires to practise medicine, not because he is concerned in the first instance for the health of specific patients; they are simply necessary as the material substrate in which health can be produced.)

²³ Broadie 1993, 382, 385.

It is true that there is no reference in *Metaphysics* Lambda to imitation of the Unmoved Mover by the spheres.²⁴ Theophrastus finds the notion of imitation difficult to reconcile with the fact that the heavens are in motion and the first principle at rest, and seems to regard it as Platonist rather than Aristotelian.²⁵ In Alexander of Aphrodisias, however, we find the argument that the soul of the sphere wants, not to achieve the Unmoved Mover, but to *be like* it; each thing emulates the perfection of the Unmoved Mover by achieving the greatest perfection open to it, and for the heaven everlasting and unchanging motion is both the nearest it can come to the changelessness of the Unmoved Mover, and also its own proper perfection.²⁶ And Natali argues that, even though Alexander refers to imitation, the Unmoved Mover nevertheless functions as a final cause rather than as a Platonic paradigmatic or exemplary cause:

Alexander makes the fact that the Unmoved Mover is an object of imitation depend on the fact that it is an object of love. In this case, even if in the end there is imitation, the Unmoved Mover does not act as a paradigmatic cause, given that it is not imitated as a perfect model, but as a beloved person. ... The paradigm is the perfection of a type of being, *and has the same form, but the beloved person can also have a different form* (translation and emphasis mine).²⁷

The analogy in *Metaph.* Λ 10, 1075a11-15 of the army with god as its general seems to imply a separate, transcendent Unmoved Mover: 'we must consider in what way the nature of the whole possesses the good and what is best, whether as *something which is separate* itself by itself, or as its ordering.'²⁸ *MA* 4, 699b32ff. and *Cael.* I 9, 279a19 also

²⁴ Broadie 1993, 379; cf. Berti 1997, 64; 2000, 228-229. However, see below, at n. 27.

²⁵ Thphr. *Metaph.* 5a23-b10, 7b23, 11a27; Raalte, M. van, *Theophrastus: Metaphysics*, Leiden 1993 (*Mnemosyne* suppl. vol. 125) 185; Laks, A. and Most, G.W., *Theophraste: Metaphysique*, Paris 1993, 36; Berti 1997, 66; 2000, 228.

²⁶ Alex. Aphr. *Quaest.* I 25 40.17-23 (cf. II 18 62.28-30). See also id., fr. 30 in Freudenthal 1884, 110.5-6 = p. 154 Genequand 1984; *de Princ.* pp. 124, 130 in Bada-wi 1968 = §23, §76 Genequand 2001; *Quaest.* I 1 4.1-3, II 19 63.20; Them. in *Metaph.* 20.31-35. Berti 1997, 67-68; id. 2000; Genequand 2001, 8-9, 149-150. Genequand 1984, 38 rightly sees this as an answer to Theophrastus' objection in his *Metaphysics* (5b7ff.) that rotation is not the best sort of movement for the heavens to derive from the Unmoved Mover. It has to be admitted, though, that it hardly answers Theophrastus' point that thinking is superior to rotating. For the sphere-souls have already to be aware of the Unmoved Mover before they can be moved by it.

²⁷ Natali 1997, 121-123.

²⁸ ἐπισκεπτόν δὲ καὶ ποτέρως ἔχει ἢ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, πότερον κεχωρισμένον τι καὶ αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτό, ἢ τὴν τάξιν. One may also note the criticism of Plato at Λ 6 1071b37: 'But indeed not even Plato can adduce the principle

apparently refer to the Unmoved Mover as being *outside* the heaven;²⁹ but the relation between these passages and the theory of the *Physics* and of *Metaphysics* Lambda is uncertain.³⁰ Gill however has argued that the heavenly spheres differ from animals in having *only* external movers, not internal ones, and that the movement of the spheres by desire in *Metaphysics* Lambda requires only a passive capacity, not an active one as is found in animals, so that there is an Unmoved Mover but no sphere-soul.³¹ Both on the view of those who, like Kosman³² and Broadie, make the Unmoved Mover in some sense the soul of the sphere, and on that of Gill, we are dealing not with three things — the body of the heavens, the soul of the heavens, and an Unmoved Mover — but with just two.

In *Physics* book eight and in most of *Metaphysics* Lambda Aristotle speaks only of one Unmoved Mover; it is only in chapter 8 of *Metaphysics* Lambda that he introduces the notion of a plurality of concentric heavenly spheres and argues that each has its own Unmoved Mover.³³ This introduces a further aspect to the question

which he sometimes envisages, (namely) that which moves itself; for the soul is posterior and contemporary with the heaven, as he says.' For this suggests that Aristotle wants to make his Unmoved Mover prior to the heaven in a way that Plato's world-soul is not.

²⁹ Cf. Jaeger 1923/1948, 356-357; Cherniss 1944, 588; Gill 1994, 32.

³⁰ Solmsen, F., 'Beyond the Heavens', *MH* 33 (1976), 24-32, at 29, followed by Bos 1989, 122, argues that the extra-cosmic beings of *Cael.* I 9 279a19 cannot be causes of movement, because 279a33-b3 asserts that the "primary and highest divinity" is immutable, in constant motion, but not moved by anything superior to itself. Conversely Kosman 1994, 143-4 finds no difficulty in interpreting the being referred to as the soul of the heavens even though it is beyond them. Simplicius, *in Cael.* 287.19ff., reports Alexander as interpreting 279a19 as possibly referring to the Prime Mover not being in place because it is incorporeal, though favouring rather the view that the reference was to the sphere of the fixed stars which is not in place because there is nothing outside it — far less plausibly, because he then had to explain the reference to the things under discussion being "beyond the outermost motion (φωρά)" by arguing that φωρά refers to rectilinear motion, as opposed to circular motion which is περιφωρά (288.4). Cf. Moraux 1963, 1202-3; Mueller 1994, 152 n. 56.

³¹ Gill 1994, 29-30 and n. 44, citing *MA* 4 700a6-11. Cf. Nussbaum 1978, 122-123; Berti 1997, 80; Bodnár 1997b, 111 n. 51. Bodnár 1997b, 112-113 notes that in the case of the heavens we are speaking of nature "in a somewhat more extended application", just because "with the celestial stuff the distinction between nature and a passive potentiality breaks down anyhow."

³² Kosman 1994 argues that the Unmoved Mover is the soul of the heaven in *de Caelo*, *Physics* 8 and *Metaphysics* Lambda alike, though with a new emphasis in the third of these works on its *activity*; the Prime Mover "form[s] with the heaven what is essentially the soul and body of a single divine entity" (145).

³³ The problem how there can be several movements if there is a single principle is raised by Thphr. *Metaph.* 5a17-18; Frede 1971, 71.

of whether sphere-souls and Unmoved Movers are identical or different; why can the spheres not move, each in its own way, through the desire of a different sphere-soul in each case for one and the same Unmoved Mover?³⁴

If there is a plurality of Unmoved Movers, it seems reasonable to suppose that they can be ranked in a hierarchy;³⁵ for only so does it seem possible to defend them against Aristotle's own argument at *Metaph.* A 8, 1074a31-8³⁶. He there claims that the reason why there can be only one cosmos is that otherwise there would need to be a plurality of Unmoved Movers, which is impossible if Unmoved Movers have no matter to differentiate them. If the Unmoved Movers for *our* world form a hierarchy, they can be differentiated even though they have no matter; in effect, each would be the unique member of a different species. But, we must suppose, there is no way of ranking Unmoved Movers for different worlds in a hierarchy.³⁷

A further problem concerns the content of the Unmoved Mover's (or Unmoved Movers') thinking. One interpretation has it that the Unmoved Mover thinks only of himself, as pure self-thinking thought

³⁴ Why need we suppose that a plurality of worlds could not all have their outermost heavens moved by desire for *one and the same* Unmoved Mover? — a question which is actually raised by Alex. ap. Simpl. in *Cael.* 270.9ff. (Genequand, loc. cit.). If the Unmoved Mover is identical with the soul of the outermost sphere, the answer is clear enough; a single soul cannot be the soul of two bodies. If the Unmoved Mover is transcendent, the answer is less clear; it is however provided by Simplicius, who responds that only what is itself unified can desire a unity (271.21ff.). Cf. Ross 1924, cxli; also Bodnár 1997a, 200 and n. 26, and Genequand 1984, 41, on Averroes. Aristotle himself, at *Metaph.* A 8, 1073a23-34, says that the first cause is unmoved *per se* and *per accidens*, but of the movers of the inferior spheres only that they are unmoved *per se*, which could be taken to imply that they are like animal souls which are unmoved *per se*, but moved *per accidens* by their own movement of the bodies in which they are (Arist. *Ph.* VIII 6, 259b16). Indeed Them. in *Metaph.* A 26.4ff., says that the first cause is unmoved both *per se* and *per accidens*, while the movers of the inferior spheres are unmoved *per se* but moved *per accidens* 'like the soul'. Simpl. in *Ph.* 1262.5-13 however suggests that Aristotle should be understood as saying that the movers of the inferior spheres are moved by something other than themselves, but that this is not movement *per accidens*. (I owe this reference to Huby, P. and Steel, C., *Priscian on Theophrastus on Sense-Perception with 'Simplicius' On Aristotle On the Soul* 2.5-12, London 1997, 20 and 139 n. 54.)

³⁵ As Aristotle indeed asserts at 1073b1-3, if we take this to refer to transcendent Unmoved Movers.

³⁶ And in any case the different Unmoved Movers must all in some way relate to the first one if the world is to be a unity. Cf., with Kahn 1985, 187, GCII 10 337a21; and below, n. 101.

³⁷ Merlan, P., 'Aristotle's Unmoved Mover', *Traditio* 4 (1946), 1-30; cf. Krämer 1964, 167-168. Discussion of this issue is well summarised at Guthrie, W.K.C., *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 6: *Aristotle: An Encounter*, Cambridge 1981, 271-276.

— whatever that means. A rival view, which has found increasing support in recent years, holds that the content of the Unmoved Mover's thought may include timeless and unchanging truths, the theorems of mathematics, and perhaps also the forms of sublunary living creatures, as was already argued by St. Thomas Aquinas,³⁸ though not the vicissitudes of individuals' histories.³⁹ A third possibility is that the supreme Unmoved Mover thinks of the subordinate Unmoved Movers only.⁴⁰

An austere interpretation of the relation between the Unmoved Mover and the world might be somewhat as follows. Human beings, who possess intellect, can and indeed should aspire to a condition like god's, even if they can achieve it only temporarily; according to *EN* X 7, 1177b33 we should try to 'regard ourselves as immortal as far as possible', and conversely according to *Metaph.* A 7, 1072b14 god's life is always as ours is at its best for a short time. The four sublunary elements, according to *GC* II 10, 336b25ff., achieve what eternity they can through constant replenishment by mutual interchange; those changes too are caused by desire for the Unmoved Mover, albeit indirectly, for it is the rotation of the heavens, and in particular the seasons produced by the complex motion of the sun on the ecliptic, that keeps the whole process going.⁴¹ The movement of the sun on the ecliptic also contributes to animal generation.⁴² The reproduction of irrational animals is seen by Aristotle, following Plato in the *Symposium*, as an attempt to achieve a type of immortality;⁴³ but

³⁸ Krämer 1969, 363, setting out the three interpretations distinguished here.

³⁹ Cf. Norman 1969; R. Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame*, London 1980, 218 n. 26; id., *Time, Creation and the Continuum*, London 1983, 146-149; Lear, J., *Aristotle: the Desire to Understand*, Cambridge 1988, 295-309; George 1989; de Koninck 1993-94. Against, Lloyd 1981, 17-20; and for a summary of views Kraye 1990, 339 n. 3.

⁴⁰ Jackson, H., 'On some passages in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 7', *Journal of Philology* 29 (1904), 138-144, at 143-144; Krämer 1964, 159-173; id. 1969, 364; Movia 1970, 74-5 n. 7. Jackson argues that the subordinate Unmoved Movers simply *are* god's thoughts. See also below, n. 101.

⁴¹ Cf. also *Ph.* VIII 6, 260a1-17, *Cael.* II 3, 286b2-9, *Mete.* I 9, 346b20-23, *Metaph.* A 6, 1072a10-18. Moraux 1973, 204; id. 1984, 421 n. 71.

⁴² *Metaph.* A 5, 1071a14-15 refers to the sun and the ecliptic, as well as the father, as moving causes in human generation; cf. also *Ph.* II 2, 194b13, 'a human being is produced by a human being and the sun' (which Alexander quotes; below, n. 140). In the first century B.C. Xenarchus says that the movement of the heaven is the cause of the coming together of form and matter (ap. Jul. *Or.* VIII[V] 3 162ab; below, n. 82).

⁴³ Cf. Arist. *de An.* II 4, 415a26-b2; *Pol.* I 2, 1252a27-30; *Metaph.* I 8, 1050b22-30. Kahn 1985, 189, 193-194. And compare also *EN* VII 13, 1153b25-32: all animals and human beings pursue pleasure, 'perhaps not that which they think or would say, but the same (for all of them); for all things that are by nature have something

neither in the case of the inanimate elements nor in that of animal reproduction can there be any question of conscious awareness or emulation of the divinity.

That is an austere account; god as Unmoved Mover is simply *there*, influencing a world most of which has no conscious awareness of him, and himself affecting the world only as an object of desire. This may not, indeed, exclude describing him as in some sense an efficient cause.⁴⁴ But, as we have already seen from Atticus' attack, the important issue for ancient interpreters was the extent to which god could be seen as actually involved with the world.

Certain passages in Aristotle's writings suggest a rather different picture. The *main* point of the comparison with the army in *Metaph.* A 10, 1075a13-15 is to argue that the good is present in the universe both in a transcendent and in an immanent way, and that the former is primary.⁴⁵ It may be wrong to press the analogy further. But if we do, one might suppose that the general is *aware* of the army, and indeed influences it as an efficient cause, by issuing commands. An army which has discipline and good order through its desire to be like the impeccably organised and self-disciplined general, who himself issues no commands to the army at all, would be a rather strange one; even more so if the general was not aware that the army existed.⁴⁶ (True, Natali observes that "It is not necessary to think that the general is the efficient cause of order; at times his motionless and silent presence is sufficient for the soldiers to arrange themselves in order and stand to attention".)⁴⁷ Still, it is reasonable to suppose that

divine about them.' (I am grateful to Professor Broadie for drawing my attention to this passage.) Berti 1997, 73 however points out that Aristotle describes the transformation of the elements and the reproduction of living things not as imitating the Unmoved Mover, but rather as imitating the eternal movement of the heavens.

⁴⁴ Broadie 1993, 389 argues that an efficient cause can cause motion without being affected itself. Judson 1994, 164-167 argues that what causes motion by causing desire for itself is a "non-energetic efficient cause" as well as a final cause (cf. Bodnár [1997b] 117); cf. also ps.-Alex. in *Metaph.* 706.31. The question whether the Unmoved Mover is an efficient cause, and in what sense, goes back in modern discussion at least to Brentano 1867/1977, 162-180; cf. Ross 1924, cxxxiii-cxxxiv, and, recently, Berti 1997; against, Natali 1997, especially 106-112. Simpl. in *Cael.* 271.13ff. already argues against Alexander that god is for Aristotle the efficient (ποιητικόν) and not just the final (τελικόν) cause of the universe, appealing *inter alia* to Aristotle's claim that nature and god do nothing in vain. See also below, nn. 94, 96.

⁴⁵ I am grateful to Michael Frede for emphasising this.

⁴⁶ Cf. Brentano 1867/1977, 167; Verdenius 1960, 61 and 67 nn. 32-33; Bodéüs 1992, 200; Broadie 1993, 379 n. 4.

⁴⁷ Natali 1997, 112 and 119-123. He further observes that it is in this way that

the divine general need only be aware of his staff officers (the sphere-souls²) and the general principles of military organisation, not also of individual private soldiers.⁴⁸

Other passages refer in passing to divine concern for mankind. It would be questionable procedure to dismiss these as just statements of common opinion which Aristotle himself does not share;⁴⁹ and in any case our concern here is not so much with Aristotle's own position but with what later ancient interpreters may have made of the texts. At *EE* VIII 2, 1248a16-33, in a passage which is often taken to imply that there is a divine element in the individual soul, Aristotle attributes certain people's correct judgement to god:

What we are looking for is this, (namely) what is the beginning of the movement in the soul. Well, it is clear. As [1] in the whole it is god, (so) also in that. For in a way it is [2] the divine element in us that causes all movement. But the beginning of reason is not reason, but something superior. What then could be superior to both knowledge and intellect, except [3] god?

Clearly [2] refers to reason as the *divine* element in each of us; whether [3] refers to a specific divine element in each of us, or rather

Alexander (fr. 30 in Freudenthal 1884 = p. 154 Genequand 1984; cf. Genequand 1984, 39) explains *Metaph.* Λ 7, 1072b2-3, and argues that he read ἔστι γὰρ τινὶ τὸ οὐ ἕνεκα καὶ τί. Cf. also Berti 2000, 233.

⁴⁸ Pines 1987, 189 n. 30 interprets Themistius' comment on this passage of Λ (*in Metaph.* 34.33-34) as implying divine involvement. But when, in the Latin version at least, Themistius compares the influence of the Unmoved Mover to the effect of *law* (*lex*; Pines has 'government') on magistrates and of a king's command on subordinates, one might suppose that he is rather trying to *minimise* the concern of the divine with what is inferior to it; laws and commands are simply there, and we react to them. Cf. Berti 2000, 237-238. George 1989, 70 suggests that the claim at *Metaph.* Λ 10, 1075b10 that medicine is, in a way, health (above, n. 22) suggests awareness by the Unmoved Mover of the things it produces; cf. Brentano 1867/1977, 128-131, and below, n. 147.

⁴⁹ Cf. *EN* I 9, 1099b9-18, X 8, 1179a24, X 9, 1179b21-3; Brentano 1867/1977, 167-168; Verdenius 1960, 60, 66 n. 28, 67 n. 31, 68 n. 44; Bodéüs 1992, 22-24. Verdenius notes that Boyancé, P., *Le culte des Muses chez les philosophes grecs*, Paris 1937, 193-194, insists that the *EN* X 9 passage expresses the same doctrine as *EE* VIII 2 below. (Professor van der Eijk drew my attention to these discussions and to the references in the next note.) Bodéüs 1992 argues that it is wrong to interpret *Metaphysics* Lambda as presenting Aristotle's "theology" in the modern sense of that term; rather, Aristotle's views on divinity are to be found in passages like those mentioned here, and in *Metaphysics* Lambda he is appealing to aspects of the notion of divinity as supporting evidence in a metaphysical enquiry, rather than developing a systematic theology. (Cf. also Natali 1997, 114.) The treatment of Λ as Aristotle's 'theology' is however already present in Alexander of Aphrodisias: Bodéüs 1992, 67 n. 34, citing Alex. *in Metaph.* 171.5-11.

to the effect on each one of us of *god* as a power greater than and not necessarily localised in human individuals, may be less certain.⁵⁰

In the dialogue *de Philosophia* Aristotle argued that, if people were released from a cave and saw the surface of the earth and the heavens for the first time, they would regard them as divine handiwork.⁵¹ The point might have been to emphasise the order and beauty of the cosmos, rather than to argue that it actually *was* a divine creation;⁵² but even so the passage might have been misunderstood — after all, it has survived because it is quoted by Balbus, the Stoic spokesman in Cicero's *De natura deorum*, in the context of an argument for divine providence. Bos attributes to Aristotle in the early dialogues the view that the First Cause, the Unmoved Mover, does not exercise providence over the world, *while the heavens do*.⁵³

Pines notes that Abū 'Alī al-Miskawayh attributes to Aristotle a text *On the Virtues of the Soul*, and that this claims, as does Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *de Providentia* (below, n. 160), that god's primary concern is for himself and that his effects on the sublunary region are secondary. Pines compares the claim at Arist. *Pol.* VII 3, 1325b28ff. that god and the cosmos have only internal activities, not concern with anything outside themselves, and suggests that Miskawayh's text is to be linked with Aristotle's reference to his exoteric discussions (ἐξωτερικοὶ λόγοι) at *Pol.* VII 1, 1323a22.⁵⁴ However, it is not clear that the activities of god on the one hand and of the cosmos on the other are being *distinguished* at VII 3, 1325b28ff.⁵⁵ Fazzo and Wiesner note that references in Arabic sources to a work *On Providence* by Aristotle reflect a misunderstanding of Alexander's presentation of his own theory as "Aristotle's", this having been taken to indicate actual quotation of an Aristotelian text.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ I am grateful to Michael Frede for discussion of this passage. Cf. also van der Eijk, P., 'Divine Movement and Human Nature in Eudemian Ethics 8.2', *Hermes* 117 (1989), 24-42, and Bodéüs 1992, 253-254, 278.

⁵¹ Arist. fr. 12 Rose³ = Cic. *N.D.* II 95.

⁵² Cf. Allan, D.J., *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, Oxford 1970², 19-20.

⁵³ Bos 1989, 72; cf. id. 87, on the Middle Platonist view referred to at n. 162 below.

⁵⁴ Pines, S., 'Un texte inconnu d'Aristote en version arabe', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-Age* 23 (1956) 5-43 (reprinted in Pines, S., *Studies in Arabic Versions of Greek Texts and in Medieval Science*, Jerusalem/Leiden 1986, 157-195) 14-15, 31-32.

⁵⁵ On this passage see also Brentano 1867/1977, 177-178.

⁵⁶ Fazzo and Wiesner 1993, 135-137.

2.1. *Sphere-souls and Unmoved Movers from Theophrastus to Alexander*

Theophrastus, Aristotle's colleague and successor, in his own so-called *Metaphysics* raises problems about the Unmoved Mover⁵⁷ and apparently argues for the heavens being ensouled but *self-moving*.⁵⁸ The aporetic character of Theophrastus' discussion should not be underestimated,⁵⁹ but there is no independent evidence which compels us to suppose that Theophrastus did accept the Unmoved Mover.⁶⁰ Cicero attributes conflicting views on the nature of god to Theophrastus, but without any reference to a mind dissociated from any body, or to a being superior to the heavens;⁶¹ and Clement of Alexandria says that god for Theophrastus is sometimes the heaven and sometimes πνεῦμα.⁶² The notion of god as absorbed in thinking of himself alone was found objectionable by the author of the *Magna Moralia*.⁶³

Subsequently a tradition developed which saw the heavenly region, but not the sublunary one, as the object of divine providential care

⁵⁷ 5a14-6a5, 7b9-8a2, 10a16.

⁵⁸ Thphr. *Metaph.* 7b19-22, 10a14-19. (True, at 10a15-16 the rotation of the universe is only described as *like a sort of life*; see Longrigg 1975, 218, and above, nn. 21 and 31). See also Thphr. frs. 159, 160, 252, 254A, 255 and 269 FHS&G; Ross and Fobes 1929, xxv, and Theiler 1957, 128 n. 5.

⁵⁹ Ellis, J., 'The Aporetic Character of Theophrastus' *Metaphysics*', in Fortenbaugh, W.W. and Sharples, R.W., eds., *Theophrastean Studies*, New Brunswick 1988 (*Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities*, 3) 215-223, at 217-20.

⁶⁰ The interpretation of Xenarchus ap. Jul. *Or.* VIII(V) 3 162A-C = Thphr. fr. 158 FHS&G is at least uncertain (see below, n. 84), and while Pico della Mirandola in Thphr. fr. 160 FHS&G attributes to Theophrastus *inter alia* the view that 'god moves the heavens as a final cause', the source of his whole report is unknown. Little weight is to be attached to the inclusion by Denis the Carthusian, in Thphr. fr. 255 FHS&G, of Theophrastus in a list along with Aristotle and Arabic philosophers who accepted the existence of Unmoved Movers *and* of god as a supreme efficient and final cause *superior* to these. Mansfeld, J., *The pseudo-Hippocratic tract ΠΕΠΙ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΩΝ and Greek Philosophy*, Assen 1971, 84 n. 89, Longrigg 1975, 218, Sorabji 1988, 158, 223, id. 1997, 204-5 and Berti 1997, 66 all hold that Theophrastus rejected the Unmoved Mover. See Sharples 1998, 87-88.

⁶¹ Cic. *N.D.* I 35 (= Thphr. fr. 252A FHS&G). See above, n. 2.

⁶² Clem. *Prot.* V 66.5 = Thphr. fr. 252B FHS&G. For Theophrastus' views on divine influence on the cosmos see also below, n. 111.

⁶³ [Arist.] *MM* II 15 1212b38-1213a7. Jaeger 1923/1948, 451 attributes this to Dicaearchus criticising Aristotle; cf. also Merlan, P., *Studies in Epicurus and Aristotle*, Wiesbaden 1960, 85-88, against Dirlmeier, F., *Aristoteles: Magna Moralia*, Berlin 1958 (*Aristoteles Werke in deutscher Übersetzung*, 8) 469-470, who interprets it as Aristotle's own polemic against a view developed in the Academy which he himself subsequently took over. Düring, I., *Aristoteles: Darstellung und Interpretation seines Denkens*, Heidelberg 1966, argues that it is Aristotle's own record of an Academic objection to the theory of *Metaphysics* Lambda. Cf. Donini, P.L., *L'etica dei Magna Moralia*, Turin 1965, 40-141 n. 22; Movia 1970, 76 n. 1.

according to Aristotle — a view which I shall refer to from now on as “NSP”, No Sublunary Providence. Why such a doctrine should be attributed to Aristotle is an issue to be considered in §3.1 below; for the present our concern is with its implications for the identity of the deity and its relation to the heavens. NSP clearly presupposes that there is *some* heavenly divinity. But human beings, and so presumably gods too, can take forethought for themselves; so no distinction between the heavens and the god who cares for them is necessarily to be presupposed. One may further remark that, while the attribution to Aristotle of a doctrine of providence in some form or other can be seen as a response to contemporary philosophical and cultural pressures, the question whether Aristotle’s supreme god is to be identified with the heavens or is superior to them may not have been subject to similar influences, in the Hellenistic period at least; after all, an identification of the divine with the world as a whole, but with the heavens in particular, was orthodox Stoic doctrine.⁶⁴

The earliest known exponent⁶⁵ of NSP is Critolaus, the Peripatetic who went on the notorious philosophical embassy to Rome in 156/5 B.C. He argued that the world was the cause of its own existence and therefore eternal.⁶⁶ One may wonder whether he would have put the point in this way if he had held the doctrine of a separate Unmoved Mover; and when he is quoted by Stobaeus⁶⁷ as holding that god is ‘intellect derived from *impassible* aither’ (νοῦν ἀπ’ αἰθέρος ἀπαθοῦς) the impassibility in question would seem to be that of a particular type of matter, not that of an Unmoved Mover which is altogether incorporeal. Diogenes Laertius V 32 (writing perhaps in about 200 A.D., but drawing on earlier sources), while attributing NSP to Aristotle, describes god as unmoved or unchanged, ἀκίνητος; presumably this is simply reproducing Aristotle’s terminology, at however many removes, and the question whether Diogenes, or his source, understood the reference as being to a sphere-soul unmoved in itself, or as being to a transcendent Unmoved Mover, may not be one that it is appropriate to ask.

⁶⁴ D.L. VII 139. A general tendency to emphasise divine transcendence may have played its part in the early Roman period; but we should distinguish between separation of the divine from the sublunary (which had throughout been a feature of Peripatetic thought as contrasted with Stoicism) and separation of the divine from any matter whatsoever, even that of the heavens.

⁶⁵ See below, n. 109.

⁶⁶ Critolaus, fr. 12 Wehrli.

⁶⁷ Critolaus, fr. 16 Wehrli.

The pseudo-Aristotelian *De mundo* (composed at some point between the latter first century B.C. and the second century A.D.) does not, as we shall see, exactly follow NSP. It describes god as ‘seated on the highest summit of heaven’ and ‘above in a pure region’ (6, 397b27, 400a6), and speaks of the divine power⁶⁸ as moving the sun and moon and causing the heavens to rotate (6, 398b9-10); but this need not imply a distinction between god and the heavens, or between Unmoved Movers and sphere-soul. After all, the heavens could be moved by a soul present within them, and there is no reference here to their being moved by *desire*.⁶⁹

[Plutarch], *Epitome* 1.7 = Aëtius, II 7.32 Diels (Aëtius writing perhaps in the later first century A.D., but drawing on earlier sources) states that

Aristotle says that the highest god is a *separate* form, mounted on the sphere of the whole, which is an aetherial body, the one which he calls ‘the fifth’. This is divided into spheres which are contiguous by nature but separated by reason, and he thinks that each of the spheres is a living creature composed of soul and body; the body is aetherial, moved in a circle, but the soul is an unmoved *logos*, the cause of the movement in actuality.⁷⁰

The parallel text in Stobaeus adds that this highest god is a separate form ‘as in Plato’.⁷¹ The most natural implication of the passage is that there is one Unmoved Mover, distinct from a plurality of spheres each of which also has its own unmoved soul.⁷² (But Athenagoras,

⁶⁸ See below, n. 116.

⁶⁹ Gottschalk 1987, 1136 and 1138 rightly notes the emphasis on monotheism in the *De mundo*. That would rule out a distinction between unmoved mover and separate sphere-souls; whether we are then to think of a soul within the heavens moving them, or a transcendent deity causing the movement of an otherwise inanimate heaven, is perhaps relatively unimportant. (See above, at n. 32.)

⁷⁰ Ἀριστοτέλης τὸν μὲν ἀνωτάτω θεὸν εἶδος χωριστὸν ἐπιβεβηκότα τῇ σφαίρᾳ τοῦ παντός, ἣτις ἐστὶν αἰθέριον σῶμα, τὸ πέμπτον ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ καλούμενον· διηρημένου δὲ τούτου κατὰ σφαίρας, τῇ μὲν φύσει συναφεῖς τῷ λόγῳ δὲ κεχωρισμένας, ἐκάστην οἶται τῶν σφαιρῶν ζῶον εἶναι σύνθετον ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς, ὃν τὸ μὲν σῶμά ἐστιν αἰθέριον κινούμενον κυκλοφορικῶς, ἡ ψυχὴ δὲ λόγος ἀκίνητος αἴτιος τῆς κινήσεως κατ’ ἐνέργειαν. For NSP in Aëtius see below, at n. 115.

⁷¹ ὁμοίως Πλάτῳ. This can be taken as a reference back to the reference to god as a separate form in the account of Plato which immediately precedes in Aëtius (see Runia’s paper in this volume [p. 282 and n. 3]). Brad Inwood however points out that ‘mounted on the sphere of the whole’ sounds like a reminiscence of ‘on the back of the heaven’ (ἐπὶ τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ νότῳ) at Plato, *Phdr.* 247bc. Since there is no similar reminiscence in the Aëtian account of Plato himself, the phrase ‘as in Plato’ might have been added as a gloss and incorporated into the text before rather than after the relevant words.

⁷² Mansfeld 1992a, 140 regards this passage in Aëtius as drawing a distinction

cited by Diels as a parallel to this passage, straightforwardly identifies the Unmoved Mover with the sphere-soul, the ether being its body.)⁷³

Arius Didymus refers to gods who move the spheres, and describes the greatest of these gods, who surrounds all the spheres, as a rational and blessed living being who exercises providence over the heavens. Moraux interprets these gods as the Unmoved Movers.⁷⁴ Nicolaus of Damascus, in the late first century B.C., paraphrasing *Metaphysics* Lambda, speaks of an Unmoved Mover for each heavenly sphere;⁷⁵ as with Aristotle's text, so with Nicolaus' report a distinction between the Unmoved Movers and the sphere-souls seems the most natural reading, but we cannot be certain about this.⁷⁶ Atticus in the later second century A.D. draws no distinction between the heavens and the Unmoved Mover;⁷⁷ as we have seen, he locates the divine for Aristotle inside the world rather than outside it as for Epicurus, and he compares divine concern for the heavens in Aristotle with the Epicurean gods' concern for *their own* well-being, finding both equally irrelevant to human concerns.⁷⁸ Hippolytus (early third century A.D., but drawing on earlier sources) distinguishes between the heavens and the fifth substance located at their outermost surface, the former being the subject of metaphysics and the latter of theology;⁷⁹ on this Mansfeld comments that "Aristotle's first Unmoved Mover has here been converted into a physical entity."⁸⁰

The Emperor Julian (the Apostate) reports that the first-century B.C. Peripatetic Xenarchus, who rejected the fifth heavenly element,⁸¹

between god and the sphere.

⁷³ Athenag. *leg.* 6 (Diels *Dox.* p. 305). Moraux 1963, 1227-8; Mueller 1994, 154 and n. 33.

⁷⁴ Ar. Did. *fr. phys.* 9 Diels; Moraux 1973, 286, noting that to describe the supreme Unmoved Mover as exercising providence is un-Aristotelian. However Mueller 1994, 156 n. 42 observes rather that "Arius shows the same uncertainty about spheres and transcendent deities as does Hippolytus" (for whom see below).

⁷⁵ Nic. Dam. *fr.* 24 Drossaart-Lulofs.

⁷⁶ Nicolaus regarded the stars as alive but lacking sense-perception: Moraux 1973, 496.

⁷⁷ Cf. Happ 1968, 81 and n. 37.

⁷⁸ 'If providence is abolished according to Epicurus, even though the gods according to him exercise all care for the preservation of their *own* good things, then according to Aristotle too providence is abolished, even if the things in heaven are disposed in a certain ordering and pattern': Atticus, *fr.* 3 66-71 *des Places*.

⁷⁹ Hippol. *Haer.* VII 19.2. Cf. Sextus Empiricus, *P.* III 218; Moraux 1963, 1227; Mansfeld 1992a, 139-141; Mueller 1994, 151-153, 156. For Hippolytus and NSP see below, n. 114.

⁸⁰ Mansfeld 1992a, 140.

⁸¹ Cf. Moraux 1963; id. 1973, 198-206. Simpl. *in Cael.* 25.24 cites Xenarchus as

attacked Aristotle and Theophrastus for seeking a further cause for this element.⁸² Moraux argued, from Xenarchus' reference to Theophrastus as 'straying towards the intelligible', that his objection was to the Unmoved Mover rather than, as Theiler had argued, to the heaven's being ensouled.⁸³ If so, then we must either suppose after all that Theophrastus did himself accept the Unmoved Mover, or else infer that Xenarchus' objection was to Theophrastus' even discussing the topic.⁸⁴ But Moraux' interpretation is not certainly right; earlier in the passage Theophrastus is commended for not having investigated the cause of 'incorporeal and intelligible substance', and we know from Proclus (*in Ti.* II 120.18 Diehl = Theophrastus fr. 159 FHS&G) that Theophrastus criticised Plato for giving an account of the generation of the soul. If 'incorporeal and intelligible substance' earlier in the passage refers to the soul, 'straying towards the intelligible' may do so as well. Xenarchus himself explained the movement of the heavens naturalistically, arguing that the upward movement of fire changes to circular movement when it reaches its proper place;⁸⁵ Julian's report is possibly evidence that Xenarchus himself rejected the notion that the heavens are ensouled, or else, if we follow Moraux' interpretation, that he rejected the Unmoved Mover.

The apparent redundancy in the explanation of the heavenly motion both by the nature of the fifth element and by the soul of the heavens created problems for interpreters of Aristotle.⁸⁶ Herminius in

Philoponus' source for the rejection of the fifth element; Moraux 1973, 214 n. 57.

⁸² Jul. *Or.* VIII (V) 3 162a-c = Thphr. fr. 158 FHS&G. On this passage cf. Sharples 1998, 94-96.

⁸³ Moraux 1973, 204-5 and n. 31; Theiler 1957, 128 n. 5.

⁸⁴ One may in any case wonder how well-informed Xenarchus was about Theophrastus' views, as opposed to Aristotle's. According to the scholion in some MSS (printed e.g. by Ross and Fobes 1929, 38) the work we know as Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* was unknown to Andronicus, though it was known to Nicolaus of Damascus. Gottschalk 1987, 1095 argues for dating Andronicus' activity in the 60's B.C. and the following decades. Nicolaus was born in c.64 B.C. and lived till after 4 B.C. (Gottschalk 1987, 1122); Xenarchus taught Strabo (who was also born c.64 B.C.) and was a friend of Augustus (Gottschalk 1987, 1119). This suggests that Xenarchus was younger than Andronicus but older than Nicolaus, and this may in turn suggest that Xenarchus may not have known the Theophrastean work. But all these considerations fall far short of being conclusive.

⁸⁵ Simpl. *in Cael.* 20.10-25, 42.19-22; Moraux 1973, 201; Gottschalk 1987, 1119-20.

⁸⁶ Julianus of Tralles had argued that the soul of the heavens explained the direction of the heaven's motion and its uniform velocity. Cf. Simpl. *in Cael.* 380.1ff., 29ff., and *in Ph.* 1219.1ff.; Merlan, P., 'Ein Simplicios-Zitat bei ps-Alexandros und ein Plotinus-Zitat bei Simplicios', *RhM* 89 (1935), 154-160, at 157; id., 'Plotinus *Enneads* 2.2', *TAPhA* 74 (1943), 179-191; Moraux 1963, 1198-1200, 1238-9;

the 2nd century A.D. was criticised by his pupil Alexander of Aphrodisias for holding that the soul's specific contribution was to cause the motion to be eternal; Alexander insisted the cause of the eternity of the motion was rather the Unmoved Mover.⁸⁷ But it would be unwise to conclude that Herminius consciously rejected the possibility that the Unmoved Mover could be distinct from the sphere-soul; it is one thing to produce an explanation that in fact leaves no role for the Unmoved Mover, another to do so deliberately.

2.2. *Alexander of Aphrodisias*

The *Quaestiones* attributed to Alexander recognise a distinction between Unmoved Mover and sphere-soul.⁸⁸ There are however some passages reported from his *Physics* commentary which seem less decided. At *Ph.* VIII 6 259b22ff. Aristotle says that, while the first principle must be unmoved even accidentally, some of the heavenly principles, those which have complex motions, are moved accidentally by things other than themselves, while only perishable things are moved accidentally by themselves. Simplicius, in *Ph.* 1261.30ff. refers to Alexander as identifying the things moved accidentally by things other than themselves with the souls of the inferior spheres,⁸⁹ and as contrasting them with the principle which moves the outermost sphere and is not moved accidentally either by itself or by anything else.⁹⁰

Simplicius then continues (*in Ph.* 1261.33-7):

Bodnár 1997a, 190 n. 1. Julianus' view is adopted by Kahn 1985, 186 and n. 6 and by Judson 1994, 160-161.

⁸⁷ Simpl. in *Cael.* 380.5ff. Merlan, locc. cit. Alexander himself identified the soul of the sphere with its nature, thus removing the redundancy while retaining the possibility of explanation of the movement by the sphere-soul's desire for the Unmoved Mover: Simplicius, in *Cael.* 380.29, in *Ph.* 1219.1; Alex. Aphr. *de Princ.* p. 123.18 in Badawī 1968 = §19 in Genequand 2001.

⁸⁸ Alex. Aphr. *Quaest.* I 1 4.1ff., I 25 40.8-10. Cf. ps.-Alex. in *Metaph.* 707.1ff. Moraux 1963, 1199; Genequand 2001, 9-10.

⁸⁹ One might ask why the souls of the inferior spheres are not moved accidentally by *themselves*, since they do after all move their bodies, but presumably the thought is that a soul that extends throughout a spherical body is not moved, even accidentally, just because the sphere rotates, though it *is* moved if the whole sphere is moved around a different axis by the sphere above it. See above, n. 20, and Simpl. in *Ph.* 1261.35-36 cited immediately below; Genequand 2001, 14.

⁹⁰ See above, n. 34. ps.-Alex. in *Metaph.* 701.1-3 says that the Unmoved Movers of *all* the spheres are unmoved both *per se* and *per accidens*.

“The first cause,” (Alexander) says, “which moves the sphere of the fixed stars, will not be moved accidentally either by itself or by something else, because the sphere of the fixed stars moves in a single motion and (does) this with its poles remaining in the same place; *or else* because it is not even, to start with, the *form* of the moved body, but rather some separate substance.”⁹¹

Simplicius here attributes to Alexander two alternative reasons for the principle of the first sphere not being moved. The first is that a soul is not moved just because its spherical body rotates. The second explanation (1261.36-7) is that the principle is not moved because it is separate from the sphere — i.e., a transcendent Unmoved Mover.⁹² Rather similarly, at *in Ph.* 1354.16ff. Simplicius reports Alexander as saying that the mover of the first sphere is not moved even accidentally because it extends throughout its circumference,⁹³ and then comments (1354.26ff. ; cf. Genequand 2001, 15 n.34) that Alexander had explained the problem better previously⁹⁴ by saying that the mover of the first sphere is not itself in place at all, and is not the

⁹¹ “τὸ δὲ πρῶτον,” φησίν, “αἴτιον τὸ τῆς ἀπλανοῦς κινητικὸν οὔτε ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ οὔτε ὑπ’ ἄλλου κινεῖτο ἂν κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς τῷ μίαν κίνησιν κινεῖσθαι τὴν ἀπλανῆ, καὶ ταύτην ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ μενόντων τῶν πόλων, ἢ τῷ μὴδὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶδος εἶναι τοῦ κινουμένου σώματος, ἀλλ’ οὐσίαν τινὰ κεχωρισμένην.”

⁹² It is indeed a general feature of Alexander’s commentaries that multiple explanations are advanced without there always being a very clear indication of a preference between them. Moraux 1967, 169 n. 1; Sharples 1990, 97 and n. 108.

⁹³ Cf. Simplicius *in Ph.* 1355.15ff. Zeller 1909, 828 n. 5.

⁹⁴ Even though Simplicius himself wants to insist, in explicit opposition to Alexander, that the Prime Mover is for Aristotle not just a *telikon* (τελικόν, final) cause but also a *poiētikon* (ποιητικόν, efficient) cause, soul causing the movement to involve change in place but unmoved intellect causing its permanence (1354.34ff.; and cf. *in Cael.* 271.13ff. cited in n. 44 above). There is however an oddity, in that at 1361.31 and 1362.13 Simplicius cites Alexander, in commenting on Aristotle, *GC* I 3, 318a1-5, as saying that the Prime Mover is a *poiētikon* cause of the movement of the heavens. Moreover in the second of these passages he apparently attributes conflicting views to Alexander: ‘Since both Alexander and some other Peripatetics think that Aristotle thought (there is) a *telikon* and *kinētikon* (κινητικόν, motive) cause of the heaven, but not a *poiētikon* one, as the passage from Alexander cited a little while ago showed, when he said that “the primary mover is the *poiētikon* (cause) of the motion of the heavenly body, (since the body itself) is ungenerated.”’ The inconsistency could indeed be removed if Simplicius were taking Alexander to accept that there is a *poiētikon* cause of the *movement* of the heavens but not of their very existence; but, apart from this not being very clearly indicated by Simplicius, it is hard to reconcile with *in Ph.* 1354.34ff., cited at the beginning of this note, where Simplicius regards even the claim that the Unmoved Mover is a *poiētikon* cause of the *movement* as involving a disagreement with Alexander. Cf. Sorabji, R., ‘Infinite power impressed: the transformation of Aristotle’s physics and theology’, in id. (ed.), *Aristotle Transformed: the ancient commentators and their influence*, London 1990, 181-198, at 191.

form of the sphere, but a separate incorporeal entity which causes movement as an object of desire.

Simplicius, in *Cael.* 116.31-117.2 reports Alexander as interpreting Aristotle at *Cael.* I 3, 270b8-9, 'all people assign the highest place to the divine ... on the grounds that immortal is joined with immortal,' as speaking of the relation between the divine heavenly body and its location in the heavens. Simplicius himself objects that the relation is rather between the heavenly body and the incorporeal Unmoved Mover. Alexander's (reasonable) interpretation of the Aristotelian text need not however imply a *rejection* of the Unmoved Mover on his part; it is simply not mentioned.⁹⁵ Alexander in his comments on the analogies in *Metaph.* Λ 10 emphasised the distinction between the first cause and the things that strive to be like it.⁹⁶

Returning to Simplicius, in *Ph.* 1261.30-37, we may note that nothing is said in his report of Alexander there about separate Unmoved Movers for the *inferior* spheres. Jaeger indeed interprets *Ph.* VIII 6, 259b29 as indicating that there is only one transcendent Unmoved Mover, that of the first sphere; Aristotle is not yet unequivocally or consistently committed to the plurality of transcendent Unmoved Movers that we find in *Metaph.* Λ 8.⁹⁷ It may then be that, even if Alexander did *himself* recognise a plurality of Unmoved Movers, he did not raise the matter in the *Physics* commentary precisely because it would involve him in awkward explanations of why Aristotle himself failed to mention such a plurality here. Aristotle's colleague Eudemus, in his own *Physics*, introduced a reference to plural Unmoved

⁹⁵ Unless indeed one were to follow Zeller 1909, 828, who introduced a distinction between god and the heavenly sphere in Alexander's view too here by reading <ἐπὶ> τοῦτον in 116.31.

⁹⁶ fr. 30 in Freudenthal 1884 = p. 154 Genequand 1984. When the pseudo-Alexander commentary on *Metaphysics* Lambda argues that the efficient causes of the spheres are not their souls as these are not gods (706.31), it must be the Unmoved Movers that are referred to as efficient causes (cf. above, n. 44). At 701.4ff., where each sphere is said to be moved by its own soul, not in the way that animals are moved by their souls exerting force on their bodies but rather in the way described in book two of *De caelo* (Hayduck ad loc. identifies the passage referred to as II 12, 292a18ff., where Aristotle argues that the heavenly bodies are not inanimate but share in action and life) pseudo-Alexander is simply endeavouring to accommodate the argument at *Cael.* II 1, 284a27ff. that the soul of the heaven cannot move it by force.

⁹⁷ Jaeger 1923/1948, 361 and n. 1. Indeed Aristotle's text does not even clearly distinguish a *first* transcendent mover from the soul of the outermost sphere; and this explains Alexander's being non-committal on this point also when commenting on the passage (above, n. 91).

Movers at this point for the sake of consistency with A 8;⁹⁸ but Peripatetics were less constrained by the canonical status of Aristotle's text in the fourth century B.C. than in the second or third century A.D.⁹⁹

Donini has argued that Alexander's *de Anima* shows a definite commitment to a plurality of transcendent intelligible forms.¹⁰⁰ If there is a plurality of Unmoved Movers, they might each be thinking of the others and thus, given the identity of thought and its object where immaterial beings are concerned, form a unity-in-plurality anticipating Neoplatonic Intellect, but with the difference that the content of this unity-in-plurality will in itself have no relation to the sublunary world.¹⁰¹

In a text surviving only in Arabic, *On the Principles of the Universe* (henceforth: *De principiis*), Alexander argues that there cannot be a plurality of movers because they have no matter to differentiate them.¹⁰² He then suggests (131.11-13 = §88 in Genequand 2001) that they might rather be differentiated as prior and posterior, but objects that this too would involve the presence of contrariety and hence complexity (131.13-16).¹⁰³ But he goes on to argue that not all relations of superiority and inferiority involve contrariety.¹⁰⁴ The

⁹⁸ Eudemus, fr. 121 Wehrli.

⁹⁹ There is another passage that might suggest that Alexander recognised only one Unmoved Mover: *Quaest.* I 25 40.25-30 seems to connect the Unmoved Movers with the daily rotation of the inferior spheres rather than with their own proper motions, leaving the latter with no explanation beyond the sphere-souls themselves. But the passage has been successfully reinterpreted, in my view, by István Bodnár, so as to remove this as a necessary implication. Cf. Sharples 1982, 210; Bodnár 1997a; Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 190-191.

¹⁰⁰ See most recently Donini, P.L., 'Alessandro di Afrodisia e i metodi dell'esegesi filosofica', in *Esegesi, parafrasi e compilazione in età tardoantica: Atti del Terzo Congresso dell'Associazione di studi tardoantichi*, a cura di C. Moreschini, Naples 1995, 107-129, at 114-15; Accattino and Donini 1996, 283-4 citing Alex. in *Metaph.* 179.1, 376.2.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Donini 1974, 29-35; Lloyd 1981, 19-20, 59. Above, n. 40. ps-Alex. in *Metaph.* 707.2, 707.17ff., 709.28, 721.32 speaks of the dependence (ἐξαρτᾶσθαι) of the Unmoved Movers of the inferior spheres on that of the first sphere. Some relation between the plurality of Unmoved Movers is indeed needed if the world is to be a unity (above, n. 36).

¹⁰² Alex. *de Princ.* 130.44-131.11 Badawī 1968; 86-87 Genequand 2001. Above, at nn. 36-37.

¹⁰³ This passage ends (131.16-18 Badawī = §89 Genequand) by citing *Ph.* VIII 6 259a16ff. for Aristotle's having held that there is only one Unmoved Mover; but Genequand argues that this passage in *De princ.* is an interpolation (Genequand 2001, 11, 159).

¹⁰⁴ 132.14-18 Badawī = §93 in Genequand 2001. The example he uses, that it is not through an admixture of cold that flame is less hot than heated iron, also

intellects that make up Plotinian intellect as a whole are distinct in that they each have the whole of Intellect for their object but each from its own perspective; it is less clear whether, in the absence of a theory of emanation and of the derivation of plurality from unity, such a move is available to Alexander.

3.1. *Aristotle and Divine Providence: The “standard view” and some variations*

The standard view attributed to Aristotle in antiquity by friend and by foe, pagan and Christian alike, is that the heavenly region is the object of divine providence but the sublunary world is not; the view above labelled NSP.¹⁰⁵ This is the view that the Platonist Atticus attributes to Aristotle and fiercely attacks.¹⁰⁶ It also appears in the report of Peripatetic doctrines by Epiphanius (4th century A.D.):

Aristotle, son of Nicomachus, was a Macedonian from Stagira according to some, but a Thracian in race according to others. He said that there are two principles, god and matter,¹⁰⁷ and that the things above the moon are objects of divine providence, but the things below the moon exist without providence and are borne along in some irrational way as chance has it. He says that there are two world-orders, that above and that below, and that that which is above is imperishable, but that which is below is subject to passing-away. And he says that the soul is the continuous activity of the body.

Theophrastus of Eresus held the same opinions as Aristotle.

Strato of Lampsacus said that the hot substance was the cause of all things. He said that the parts of the world are infinite and that every living creature is capable of possessing intellect.

Praxiphanes of Rhodes held the same opinions as Theophrastus.

Critolaus of Phaselus held the same opinions as Aristotle.¹⁰⁸

appears in *Quaest.* II 17 attributed to Alexander (62.1-2 Bruns) though since the difference is there explained by the physical properties of the iron, and more generally the difference between heavenly and terrestrial fire is explained by the latter at least having matter, it is difficult to see how the argument can be used in *de Princ.* to explain the difference in rank between two Unmoved Movers *neither* of which has matter. Cf. Genequand 2001, 160.

¹⁰⁵ Festugière, A.-J., *L'Idéal religieux des grecs et l'Évangile*, Paris 1932, 224-262; Moraux, P., 'L'exposé de la philosophie d'Aristote chez Diogène Laërce', *RPhL* 47 (1949), 5-43, at 33-4; id. 1970, 54-55; id. 1973, 286 n. 46; id. 1986, 282; Happ 1968, 81; Mansfeld 1992a, 136.

¹⁰⁶ Atticus, fr. 3 des Places (above, n. 4).

¹⁰⁷ This suggests Stoic influence, even if the doctrine of two principles originated in the early Academy; see David Sedley's paper in the present volume.

¹⁰⁸ 'Ἀριστοτέλης ὁ Νικομάχου, κατὰ μὲν τινὰς Μακεδὼν ἀπὸ Σταγείρων, ὡς δὲ ἔνιοι Θρᾷξ ἦν τὸ γένος. ἔλεγε δὲ δύο ἀρχὰς εἶναι, θεὸν καὶ ὕλην. καὶ τὰ μὲν ὑπεράνω

The structure of this report is strange: if Theophrastus thought the same as Aristotle, why couple Praxiphanes with the latter and Critolaus with the former? But this would have come about naturally if Critolaus was the source for the earlier views, and reported Theophrastus as agreeing with Aristotle and Praxiphanes with Theophrastus; Epiphanius, or his source, will then have added the statement that Critolaus agreed with Aristotle and thus produced the apparent inconsequentiality in the report.¹⁰⁹

The considerations that led to the attribution of NSP to Aristotle must remain a matter of speculation. But we can at least distinguish two aspects of the question; why a doctrine of providence was attributed to Aristotle at all, and why it was a doctrine that confined providence to the heavens. As to the former, we have seen that there are passages in the esoteric works, and that there were also passages in the exoteric works now lost, which could justify such an attribution more than, on a conventional reading, *Metaphysics* Lambda could do; and Stoic assertion of divine providence, and Epicurean denial of it, might well make both Peripatetics and doxographers feel impelled, in their different ways, to formulate a theory for Aristotle. As to why such providence was extended only to the heavens and denied to the

τῆς σελήνης θείας προνοίας τυγχάνειν, τὰ δὲ κάτωθεν τῆς σελήνης ἀπρονόητα ὑπάρχειν καὶ φορᾶ τινι ἀλόγῳ φέρεσθαι ὡς ἔτυχεν. εἶναι δὲ λέγει δύο κόσμους, τὸν ἄνω καὶ τὸν κάτω, καὶ τὸν μὲν ἄνω ἀφθαρτον, τὸν δὲ κάτω φθαρτόν. καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐντελέχειαν σώματος λέγει.

Θεόφραστος Ἐρέσιος τὰ αὐτὰ Ἀριστοτέλει ἐδόξασε.

Στράτων [ὦν] ἐκ Λαμψάκου τὴν θερμὴν οὐσίαν ἔλεγεν αἰτίαν πάντων ὑπάρχειν. ἄπειρα δὲ ἔλεγεν εἶναι τὰ μέρη τοῦ κόσμου, καὶ πᾶν ζῶον ἔλεγε νοῦ δεκτικὸν εἶναι.

Πραξιφάνης Ῥόδιος τὰ αὐτὰ τῷ Θεοφράστῳ ἐδόξασε.

Κριτόλαος ὁ Φασηλίτης τὰ αὐτὰ τῷ Ἀριστοτέλει ἐδόξασε.

(Epiphanius, *de Fide* IX 35-9 [GCS vol. 3 p. 508.4-15 Holl and Dummer] = Diels *Dox.* 592.9-20 = Critolaus fr. 15 Wehrli.) NSP is also the position adopted, at least by implication, in Ar. Did. fr. phys. 9; above, n. 74. For soul as ἐντελέχεια (by confusion with ἐντελέχεια) see Mansfeld 1990, 3130.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Sharples 1998, 104. That attribution of NSP to Aristotle goes back at least to Critolaus is argued by Moraux 1970, 54-55; id. 1986, 282 and n. 6. Doubts about the value of Epiphanius' report as evidence for this are however expressed by Wehrli, F., *Die Schule des Aristoteles: 10, Hieronymos von Rhodos: Kritolaos und seine Schüler*, Basel 1969², 66, and Mueller 1994, 155 n. 42. Critolaus fr. 37 Wehrli, comparing Pericles' statesmanship to god not involving himself with small details (cf. Moraux 1970, 55; id. 1984, 498-499), might suggest a position more like that of the *De mundo* (below); Mueller however suggests that the comparison may be Plutarch's rather than Critolaus' own. In any case no concern for the sublunary need be implied; the third of the views listed in Epict. *Diss.* 1.12.1-3 is that of "those who say that (the divine) both exists and exercises providence, but over great and heavenly things, not over any of the things on earth." See Happ 1968, 79 and n. 30; below, n. 111.

sublunary, it is perhaps more plausible to see this not as a weaker version of the complete self-absorption of the Unmoved Mover of *Metaphysics* Lambda — a text which had probably not yet attained the canonical status it achieved later — but as a recognition of the difference in Aristotle's system between the eternal heavens and the perishable sublunary, and of the notion, already present in Aristotle, *Metaph.* A 10¹¹⁰ and in Theophrastus,¹¹¹ that order is more present in some parts of the universe than in others — a notion which can be seen as a distinctive feature of the Aristotelian tradition by contrast with Stoic universal providence on the one hand¹¹² and Epicurean denial of providence altogether on the other.¹¹³

There are indeed variations in the exact formulation of NSP, variations which can be seen as reflecting, even if unconsciously, different

¹¹⁰ 1075a16-23.

¹¹¹ Thphr. *Metaph.* 8a3-8, 11b17-21. Cf. Sharples 1998, 94. As Jaap Mansfeld points out to me, the order in the world, and only the order, not also the disorder, is explicitly ascribed to God by Theophrastus, *Metarsiology* 14.14-17, p. 270 in Daiber, H., 'The *Meteorology* of Theophrastus in Syriac and Arabic translation', in Fortenbaugh, W.W. and Gutas, D., eds., *Theophrastus: his Psychological, Doxographical and Scientific Writings* New Brunswick 1992 (*Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities*, vol. 5), 166-293 (where see also 280-281); Mansfeld 1992b, especially pp. 322-323; id., 'Theology', in Algra, K., Barnes, J., Mansfeld, J., and Schofield, M., eds., *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge 1999, 452-478, at 452-453. Mansfeld 1992b, 331-333 points out that Theophrastus recognised some imperfection even in the heavens (Thphr. *Metaph.* 10a27, 11b17) and that Theophrastus' successor Strato went further in denying divine involvement in the natural processes of any part of the universe. Those who allowed Aristotle providence over the heavens, though not over the sublunary region, disregarded this trend. One might explain this by saying that they were concerned to report Aristotle's views, in a way that Theophrastus and Strato were not; that this should be so already for Critolaus is significant for the change in the way in which the Lyceum saw its own relation to Aristotle. See also above, n. 109.

¹¹² Below, n. 163. That providence extends to individuals is implied for the Stoics, or rather for Chrysippus (though not for Cleanthes) by the identification of providence with fate and the universality of the latter (cf. *SVF* I 176, II 528, 933, 937). There are passages (notably Cic. *N.D.* II 167 and Plutarch in *SVF* II 1178) which suggest that less important individuals, at least, could be neglected by providence in the Stoic view; but it is difficult to see how this can be reconciled with their emphasis on the world as a unity held together by fate or providence which is also divine reason (λόγος) and divine spirit (πνεῦμα) penetrating everywhere (*SVF* II 634, 913, 945; and on the reports in Cicero and Plutarch, cf. Sharples 1983, 149-150). Moreover, how would the acceptance of apparent adversity as in fact in accordance with the interests of the whole, attested by Chrysippus in *SVF* III 191, make sense if what happened to an individual might simply be a matter of indifference as far as providence is concerned? — The whole topic is judiciously discussed by Dobbin 1998, 139. I am grateful to Brad Inwood for pressing me on this issue.

¹¹³ See below, nn. 163, 165.

degrees of emphasis on two aspects of the Peripatetic world-view, on the one hand the claim that order deriving from a supreme divine principle is present in the world as a whole, and on the other the recognition that this order is present to a different extent at different levels of the hierarchy. (There is also a question, which we will have cause to return to in connection with Alexander, whether the mere presence of order deriving from a divine principle is sufficient to justify application of the term “providence” at all.)

Epiphanius, as we have seen, speaks of sublunary things as ‘borne along in some irrational motion as chance has it.’ Atticus and Hippolytus attribute to Aristotle the view that the sublunary is governed by its own nature rather than by providence.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, Diogenes Laertius in his account of Aristotle (V 32), while restricting providence to the heavens, speaks (in Stoic language) of a ‘sympathy’ (συνπάθεια) between terrestrial things and the heavens, and Aëtius II 3.4 describes the sublunary world as participating in good order according to Aristotle, but only accidentally.¹¹⁵ In the pseudo-Aristotelian *de Mundo*, while god himself is removed from direct involvement with mundane affairs, his power (δύναμις) extends to and influences them as the King of Persia exercises influence through his subordinates.¹¹⁶ That god has any interest in the effects thereby

¹¹⁴ Atticus, fr. 8 (below, n. 170); Hippol. *haer.* VII 19.2. Mansfeld 1992a, 136; Mueller 1994, 151.

¹¹⁵ So too Adrastus of Aphrodisias ap. Theo Sm. 149.14-15 Hiller. Broadie, S. ‘Three philosophers look at the stars’, forthcoming in V. Caston and D. Graham, eds., *The Path of Persuasion: Essays on Early Greek Philosophy*, notes that Thphr. *Metaph.* 5b24 already complains that sublunary things are influenced by the heavenly rotation only accidentally (though not having an explicit reference to the heavens as objects of *providence*). Cf. also Broadie 1993, 384.

¹¹⁶ *De mundo* 6, 397b19-25, 398a10ff. Cf. Moraux 1970, 57; Kraye 1990, 341. At 398a5 that even god’s *power* penetrates to the terrestrial region seems to be denied; this is simple inconsistency (cf. Furley, D.J., *Aristotle: On the Cosmos*, with Forster, E.S., *Aristotle: On Sophistical Refutations; On Coming-to-Be and Passing Away*, Loeb Classical Library, 1955, 387 note a), but may none the less be symptomatic of a desire to minimise divine involvement in the universe. Moraux 1984, 47 notes that the god of the *De mundo* is an efficient cause where that of *Metaphysics* Lambda is only a final cause (see, however, above n. 44); but cf. Moraux 1984, 40 and n. 137 on the failure to clarify the relation between god and his δύναμις. Alexander too speaks of a power (δύναμις) from the divine heavens (*Mantissa* 172.17-19, *Quaest.* II 3 47.30-32, 49.28-30; cf. Sharples, R.W., ‘Alexander of Aphrodisias: Scholasticism and Innovation’, *ANRW* II 36.1, Berlin 1987, 1176-1243, at 1188, 1217; Donini, P.L., ‘*Theia dunamis* in Alessandro di Afrodisia’, in F. Romano and R. Loredano Cardullo, eds., *Dunamis nel neoplatonismo: atti del II colloquio internazionale del centro di ricerca sul neoplatonismo*, Florence 1996 (*Symbolon*, 16), 12-29; Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 41, 63-68; Genequand 2001, 2, 18-19; and below at nn. 133-134). Moraux 1984, 46 contrasts the *De mundo* and Alex. *Quaest.* II 3, noting that the latter speaks of a

produced is not emphasised, but it is not denied either. We may note, but probably should not press, that the Persian king, at least, was kept *informed* of affairs in his empire (398a34); more tellingly, god in the *de Mundo* directs things *as he wishes* (400b13).¹¹⁷

At a later date, one of the most remarkable discussions within the Aristotelian tradition of divine involvement in the sublunary world was prompted by a controversy relating to Aristotle's account of human intellect. At *GA* II 3, 736b27 he refers to intellect being divine¹¹⁸ and entering the human embryo 'from outside'.¹¹⁹ That part of the human soul enters from outside was asserted by the first-century-B.C. Peripatetic Cratippus,¹²⁰ and Moraux notes that this doctrine is attributed to a range of philosophers by Aëtius¹²¹ and was attacked by Atticus.¹²² And a further attack¹²³ prompted the response which will concern us here. In the final section, beginning at 112.5, of the treatise *de Intellectu* (= *de Anima libri mantissa* 106-113) attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias the objection is recorded that intellect

power from the *heavens* only. Verdenius 1960, 61 regards nature as a mediating force, transmitting divine influence to the world, already in Aristotle himself; Moraux 1970, 55, on the other hand, regards power (δύναμις) in the *De mundo* as Stoic in origin. See Runia's paper in this volume.

¹¹⁷ Gottschalk 1987, 1139 well describes the *De mundo* as "an interesting attempt to supply a deficiency in Aristotle's system which has been noticed by many students of his thought."

¹¹⁸ Cf. *EN* X 7, 1177a15-16: intellect is either divine or the most divine part of a human being. Moraux 1942, 105-108 notes that there is nothing in the *GA* passage to require an identification of 'intellect from outside' with *god*; cf. Movia 1970, 65, and below n. 128.

¹¹⁹ Aristotle's words were picked up by Thphr. frs. 271 and 307a FHS&G; Moraux 1973, 231 n. 26. For a divine element — identified with soul rather than intellect, and so not confined to human beings — entering living creatures at conception (to judge from the metaphor "sown", κατασπειρομένην) cf. Alex. *Quaest.* II 3 49.28-9.

¹²⁰ Cic. *Div.* I 70; Moraux 1973, 230-1.

¹²¹ Aëtius IV 5.11, citing Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato, Xenocrates and Cleanthes, but *not* Aristotle; Moraux 1984, 407-9. Aristotle is cited as saying that the intellect in actuality enters "from outside", though the potential intellect does not, in a possibly related passage at Nemesius, *Nat. hom.* 1.1; cf. Mansfeld 1990, 3092 n. 138. Nemesius adds that Aristotle 'affirms that very few people, and only those who have practised philosophy, possess intellect in actuality' (κομιδῇ γούν ὀλίγους τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ μόνους τοὺς φιλοσοφῆσαντας τὸν ἐνεργεῖα νοῦν ἔχειν διαβεβαιούται), which is closer to the position of Alexander himself in the *de Anima* (82.2,6) than to the doctrine reported in the *de Intellectu* and discussed below. I am grateful to Bernard Besnier for pressing me on the Aëtius passage.

¹²² Atticus, fr. 7.75-81 des Places. Donini 1974, 51; Moraux 1984, 416 and n. 57.

¹²³ Which Donini 1974, 51 has interpreted as a development of the attack by Atticus. Cf. Rashed 1997, 189-191, arguing that Atticus himself resolved the difficulty by supposing that the soul had a corporeal 'vehicle'.

could not ‘enter from outside’ because, being immaterial, it could not move at all (112.6-8). Someone — presumably a Peripatetic — replied to this by arguing (112.8-113.12) that divine intellect does not need to move, because it is spatially extended throughout the universe, becoming manifest as intellect¹²⁴ only in those places where there are bodies suitable for this — i.e. human bodies, and presumably, though the text does not say so, the heavenly bodies also. This theory (henceforth “T”) may be described as Stoicizing in so far as it is pantheistic, but it is emphatically not materialist or corporealist.¹²⁵ The author of *de Intellectu*, or at least of this section of it, for his part then rejects this defence (113.12-24), arguing that it is unworthy of the divine to be present everywhere in the sublunary world,¹²⁶ and suggests instead that, just because intellect is immaterial, its coming ‘from outside’ need not involve spatial movement at all. In effect, to say that an immaterial substance is everywhere is just as inappropriate as to raise problems about its movement from place to place.

The proposer of T anticipates Alexander himself in suggesting¹²⁷ that there is a single intellect for all human beings, in identifying this with the Active Intellect of Aristotle, *de An.* III 5,¹²⁸ and in connecting its operation with the effect of the heavens on the sublunary; though, unlike Alexander, he apparently allows that it might be involved with

¹²⁴ Though the author does insist that the divine intellect, present in the material universe, *constantly* performs its own activities (112.11).

¹²⁵ This is rightly emphasised by Moraux 1942, 156-7. In particular, it should be emphasised that there is no reference to spirit (πνεῦμα) in the context of this theory. It is after all a theory of *intellect*, and intellect is the one soul-function which for Aristotle himself does not directly involve the body and hence does not involve πνεῦμα either. I am grateful to Bernard Besnier for emphasising this. Whereas Moraux 1942, 105-108 argued that Alexander treats the divine ‘intellect from outside’ of *GA* II 3 as the *object* of our thought because his theory of soul ruled out regarding human intellect as subject of thinking as divine, the theory at present under discussion is concerned with the thinking subject rather than with its object.

¹²⁶ Which is a point made also by Alexander himself, against the Stoics: *Mixt.* 11, 226.24ff.

¹²⁷ Though somewhat tentatively: 113.2-4, ‘So, he said that, if one is to suppose that intellect is divine and imperishable according to Aristotle at all, one must think [that it is so] in this way, and not otherwise.’ (I am grateful to Jan Opsomer for drawing my attention to this.)

¹²⁸ 113.4-5: ‘And, fitting the passage in the third book of [Aristotle’s] *On the Soul* to this [theory], he said that both the “disposition” and the “light” should be applied to this [intellect] that is everywhere.’ The identification of the Active Intellect with god, and its development by Alexander into a new theory of the relation between the human and the divine — so that our minds, by thinking of god, can temporarily become identical with him — introduces a new aspect into the relation between god and the world in Aristotelian tradition; but to discuss this in detail is beyond the limits of this paper.

organising the fortunes of individuals.¹²⁹ The theory, it may be noted, is described as a theory of *providence* only when subsequently being rejected (113.15).

We cannot identify the proposer of T. This section of the *de Intellectu* starts abruptly at 112.5 with the words ‘wanting to show that the intellect is immortal and to escape the difficulties...’. Either something has fallen out of the text, in which case we have no direct evidence at all of who proposed T, or else ‘wanting to show’ refers back to the last person mentioned previously, namely, the person whose theory of intellect has been under discussion in pages 110-111. *That* section starts off with a reference to its contents deriving ‘from Aristotle’. Moraux argued that this was a reference to a second-century A.D. Peripatetic, Aristoteles of Mytilene.¹³⁰ In fact it seems more likely, as Schroeder and Todd have argued, that the reference is to the derivation of the doctrine of ‘intellect from outside’ from Aristotle the Stagirite, so that we are not being given any information about who is actually responsible for the interpretation that follows at 110-111.¹³¹ Even if we were, it would still be far from certain that the doctrine of 112.5ff. was to be attributed to the same person; beyond their both being concerned with ‘intellect from outside’, there is little doctrinal similarity between 110-111 and 112.5ff. Moreover, since we cannot even be certain that the *de Intellectu* is a work by

¹²⁹ id. 113.6-12: ‘This intellect either organises things here [on earth] on its own, in respect of their relation to the heavenly bodies, and combines and separates them, so that it is itself the craftsman [producing] the intellect that is potentially, as well; or else [it organises things here] along with the orderly movement of the heavenly bodies. For it is by this that things here are chiefly produced, by the approaching and withdrawing of the sun; either they are produced by [the sun] and the intellect here [together], or else it is nature that is produced by these things [the heavenly bodies] and their movement, while it [nature] organises individual things along with intellect.’ — Perhaps though τὰ καθέκαστα in 113.12 should not be pressed; it might refer to “particular aspects” rather than to individuals as such. For the author of the *de Intellectu* himself, the Active Intellect can affect the minds of individuals *through their awareness of it*; but this is a different matter from its being directly involved in the organisation of sublunary nature.

¹³⁰ Moraux, P., ‘Aristoteles, der Lehrer Alexanders von Aphrodisias’, *AGPh* 49 (1967), 169-182.

¹³¹ Schroeder, F.M. and Todd, R.B., *Two Aristotelian Greek Commentators on the Intellect: The De Intellectu attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius’ Paraphrase of Aristotle De Anima 3.4-8*, Toronto 1990 (*Medieval Sources in Translation*, 33), 28. Accattino and Donini 1996, xxvii n. 77 reject this, partly because as presented by Schroeder and Todd it involves emending the text. But the same interpretation can in fact be derived from the transmitted text. See Opsomer, J. and Sharples, R.W., ‘“I heard this from Aristotle”: a modest proposal’, *CQ* 50 (2000), 252-256.

Alexander himself or from his time,¹³² we cannot be certain that T is earlier than Alexander.

There is one further piece of evidence relating to the last point at least, though it too is not conclusive. *Quaestio* II 3 attributed to Alexander regards the view that divine providence produces human rationality by means of the influence or power (δύναμις) of the heavens as ‘established’ (ἔκειτο, 48.18-22). Fazzo takes this as a reference to Alexander’s own *de Providentia*, now surviving only in Arabic; Moraux as a reference to T and especially to *de Intellectu* 113.6-12.¹³³ References to *de Intellectu* and to *de Providentia* are not mutually exclusive; we are concerned with a doctrine present in both. Given that the first, apparently rejected solution in the *Quaestio* turns on the notion of a power which is present in the sublunary elements but only active in certain compounds,¹³⁴ a reference to T seems highly probable, though not ultimately certain.¹³⁵

¹³² Schroeder, F.M., ‘The Provenance of the *De Intellectu* attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias’, *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 8 (1997), 105-120 has argued that the *de Intellectu* as a whole might be as late as the sixth century A.D. Rashed 1997, on the other hand, has pointed to similarities between the last section of *de Intellectu* and fragments of Alexander’s *Physics* commentary in cod. Paris. suppl. gr. 643, 101r and ap. Simpl. in *Ph.* 964.9-23, arguing that the greater sophistication of the treatment in the commentary makes it likely that the *de Intellectu* antedates it rather than the reverse. This latter argument has some weight, but cannot be regarded as decisive. See also below, n. 146.

¹³³ Fazzo 1988, 646 n. 23; Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 65 n. 96, 205 n. 27; Moraux 1967, 160 n. 2, 163-4 n. 2.

¹³⁴ Cf. 49.25-7.

¹³⁵ Two passages of *Quaest.* II 3 call for further comment. (i) At 48.29-49.1 the translation in Sharples 1992, 96 is grammatically impossible — I am grateful to Mary Ruskin for pointing this out — and the correct interpretation had already been given by Fazzo 1988, 647 (cf. Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 207-209 and n. 34); “the simple bodies too contribute, to the coming-to-be of the (compound, animal) bodies that come to be from them, the divine power which they share in according to their proximity” (sc. to the heavens, as explained at 49.5-8, below). Presumably the sense in which the simple bodies contribute the divine power, which has just been said at 48.25 to come from *outside*, is that (a) the divine power is as it were latent in them, and perhaps also that (b) only bodies of a certain type will be capable of having soul. The contrast between soul as something added to a body with a certain constitution here in *Quaest.* II 3, and soul as the product of bodily composition in Alexander’s *de An.*, noted by Moraux 1942, 36 and repeated at Sharples 1992, 96 n. 312, thus becomes less pronounced. (ii) At Sharples 1992, 96 I glossed 49.5-8, on the presence of more or less of the divine power in bodies depending on their proximity to the heavens and degree of density, as referring to *compound* bodies. It in fact refers to the simple bodies, or elements; so, rightly, Fazzo 1988, 647, Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 209.

3.2. *Providence in Alexander*

Alexander himself insists that one cannot speak of providence (or, in human terms, forethought) where an effect is entirely accidental.¹³⁶ He takes NSP as the starting point for developing his own interpretation of Aristotelian providence as extending to the sublunary, though only to species whose continuity depends on the processes of generation caused by the movement of the heavens,¹³⁷ and not to individuals as such. In *Quaest.* I 25 and II 19, and in the treatise *de Providentia*, he presents the view that it is the heavens that are the object of providence and the view that it is the sublunary that is alternatives, clearly favouring the latter.¹³⁸ And in *de Providentia* he unconvincingly interprets the claim that “providence extends as far as the moon” as meaning that it extends from there *downwards*, with the sublunary region as its proper object.¹³⁹ It is not strange that Alexander felt obliged to take account of NSP, but it *is* strange that he apparently presents ‘Providence extends as far as the sphere of the Moon’ as a direct quotation from Aristotle which he needs to explain, or rather to explain away; for it actually appears nowhere in Aristotle’s surviving works.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Alex. Aphr. *de Prov.* 63.2, *Quaest.* II 21 65.25ff., 68.19ff., 70.9ff. *Quaestio* II 21 is an incomplete and apparently unfinished discussion of the problem that providence can neither be accidental nor the primary concern of the divine. Below, n. 160. Its authenticity has been challenged by Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 257-259; but see Sharples 2000.

¹³⁷ Alex. *Quaest.* I 25 41.8ff., II 19 63.15ff., *de Prov.* 33.1ff., 59.6-63.2, 89.1-13 Ruland. Above, nn. 41-42. Moraux 1970, 60 points out that Alexander (in *Quaest.* II 3) goes beyond Aristotle in explaining not just the persistence of sublunary forms but the very nature of those forms by the power (δύναμις) from the heavens.

¹³⁸ *Quaest.* I 25 41.4-18, II 19 63.15-28, *de Prov.* 59.6-63.2. Below, at nn. 160-161.

¹³⁹ In a passage which Plotinus in turn picked up at III 3[48], 7.7; Sharples 1994, 179-180. Cf. Fazzo in Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 60-61, pointing out that, implausible though Alexander’s interpretation is, it appeals to the more general use of *pronoia* (πρόνοια) for ‘foresight’, which is also the way in which Aristotle himself employs the word. For ‘foresight’ is located where it is exercised.

¹⁴⁰ Alex. *de Prov.* 59.6-12. Cf. Sharples 1982, 201 and n. 22; id. 1994, 179-180. Ruland prints the words as a quotation from Aristotle. Alexander’s actual words (in my translation of Ruland’s German) are ‘it is quite right, that the Philosopher says “Providence extends as far as the sphere of the Moon”;’ this in itself perhaps leaves it open that Alexander may intend the remark as a summary of Aristotle’s doctrine rather than as a direct quotation, unlike the following quotation from *Physics* II 2, 194b13, which is introduced by the words “it is from him that there comes the sentence.” Subsequently however, at 61.5, Alexander refers to ‘his (i.e. Aristotle’s) formulation “in the whole body, which ends with the sphere of the Moon”.’ Maimonides, in *Guide of the Perplexed* III 17, drawing on Alexander, first attributes NSP to Aristotle, reporting “Providence extends as far as the sphere of the Moon” as support for this, and then presents Alexander’s own view, that there is

Alexander insists that one can only speak of providence exercised in awareness of the consequences.¹⁴¹ This is a position we should surely endorse; for without such awareness, even if he succeeded in showing that the relation between god and the sublunary world is not purely accidental, it is indeed not clear that it would be legitimate to speak of providence at all.¹⁴² But it raises the question how Alexander interpreted the discussion of *Metaphysics* Lambda. Unfortunately, for that book we only have the commentary of pseudo-Alexander, which Freudenthal conclusively showed does not derive from the genuine commentary now lost,¹⁴³ and a number of citations by Averroes of the genuine commentary, which however include relatively little on the second half of book Lambda; indeed Averroes only had Alexander's commentary on two-thirds of the book, and some of his references to Alexander on the second part may have reached him by other routes and not directly from the commentary.¹⁴⁴

Norman argues that pseudo-Alexander at 696.33-697.6 (Hayduck)¹⁴⁵ follows Aristotle's own wording so closely that it is difficult to determine *what* position it takes on the issue of the content of the Unmoved Mover's thought. Norman himself takes this to show that pseudo-Alexander at least did not misinterpret Aristotle in the way he argues later critics did, by denying the Unmoved Mover knowledge of anything outside itself. However, by Norman's own argument, if there is doubt about the interpretation of Aristotle on this issue, there must be doubt about that of pseudo-Alexander too, just because it follows Aristotle's expression so closely.¹⁴⁶

providence for sublunary species but not for individuals, as another version of NSP — which, from the perspective of a view like Maimonides' which insists on providential concern for individual human beings, it arguably is. (This resolves the perplexity concerning Maimonides' interpretation expressed by Happ 1968, 82 n. 45.) Providence for universals rather than particulars is similarly conflated with NSP by Ibn Abī Sa'īd; Pines, S., 'A tenth century philosophical correspondence', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 24 (1955), 103-136 (reprinted in Hyman, A., ed., *Essays in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy*, New York 1977, 357-390), at 124 (and cf. 126 on Maimonides). See also nn. 109, 162.

¹⁴¹ *de Prov.* 63.2-7, 65.9ff., cf. *de Princ.* 130.42ff. Badawī (= §85 Genequand), 135.27ff. (= §120) and *Quaest.* II 21 66.33-67.22.

¹⁴² Moraux 1942, 199-202, writing before the discovery of the Arabic material, complained that Alexander's theory made providence mechanistic. See also Moraux 1970, 58-61.

¹⁴³ Freudenthal 1884; cf. Tarán 1987, 218-220 with his nn. 14 and 19.

¹⁴⁴ See Genequand 1984, 7.

¹⁴⁵ = 671.8-18 Bonitz; Norman 1969, 72-73.

¹⁴⁶ A subsequent passage in ps-Alex., at *in Metaph.* 699.1-11, is copied from *de Intellectu* 109.25-110.3 (Freudenthal 1884, 26-27). The *de Intellectu* argues at 109.4-23

As for the genuine Alexander, George notes that he interpreted Aristotle, *Metaph.* Λ 4 1070b34-35, 'and moreover besides these (there is) the way in which the first of all things (is a cause) by moving all things,' as contrasting the Prime Mover with cases such as the production of health by medicine, and therefore denied that the Prime Mover contains within itself the form of the things it produces.¹⁴⁷ And whereas Aristotle, *Metaph.* A 2 983a2-10 implies that god has *knowledge* of the first principles and causes of all things,¹⁴⁸ Alexander in commenting on this passage, at *in Metaph.* 18.9, argues that god *is* the first principle and cause of other things and that for this reason metaphysics is called theology (θεολογική). The latter point is at best an argument from silence for Alexander denying knowledge to the first cause; the report in Averroes is more troubling. Pines claims that there is no hint in Alexander's own writings, or in the commentaries of pseudo-Alexander, Themistius or Averroes on *Metaphysics* Lambda, of Alexander's having already held a doctrine of the first cause being aware of anything other than itself, including its effects on the world.¹⁴⁹

In *de Providentia*, on the other hand, Alexander argues that the

that the developed human intellect knows itself in knowing its objects, and then, at 109.23ff., that the primary intellect differs in having no object other than itself. Ps.-Alex. takes over the point that it has no object other than itself, but not the contrast in this respect with human intellect; though he does, as the Aristotelian context requires, contrast the continuous activity of divine intellect with the intermittent activity of human intellect. It is questionable whether one should assume from this that ps.-Alex. is deliberately avoiding the former contrast. It does however seem that this passage, which presents divine intellect having itself as its only object as the climax of a tricolon (*de Intellectu* 110.1-2 = *in Metaph.* 699.9-11) originally belongs to the *De intellectu*, where the contrast with human intellect in this respect is present, and was copied by the *Metaph.* commentary rather than *vice versa* — which is significant, for the dating of both works is disputed. Tarán has argued (1987, 216ff. and 230 n. 40) that the ps.-Alex. *Metaphysics* commentary is earlier than Syrianus (who died c.437 A.D.). For the *de Intellectu*, which Schroeder claims may be as late as the sixth century A.D., see n. 132 above; and on the whole question see my 'Pseudo-Alexander on Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Λ ', forthcoming in G. Movia, ed., *Metafisica e antimetafisica nei antichi e nei moderni*, Cagliari 2002.

¹⁴⁷ George 1989, 68; Alex. fr. 20 in Freudenthal 1884, 96-7 = pp. 122-123 Genequand 1984. I have quoted the sentence from the *Metaphysics* according to the original MS reading $\epsilon\tau\iota\ \pi\alpha\rho\alpha\ \tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha\ \omega\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\ \pi\rho\acute{o}\tau\omega\nu\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\nu\ \kappa\iota\nu\omicron\upsilon\nu\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$, emended to $\tau\omicron\ \omega\varsigma$ by Bonitz but defended by Brentano: George 1989, 64-66. What matters for our present purpose is not what Aristotle wrote but what text Alexander read.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Metaph.* A 2, 982b9-10, and Verdenius 1960, 68 n. 34; Bodéüs 1992, 68-69; Broadie 1993, 409 and n. 24. I am grateful to Philip van der Eijk for drawing my attention to these passages.

¹⁴⁹ Pines 1987, 179-180.

divine knows, and indeed wills, its effects,¹⁵⁰ thereby apparently anticipating Themistius, who according to Pines was responsible for first introducing into Aristotelian interpretation the influential doctrine that god must be aware of the effects he causes.¹⁵¹ Neither what is said in *de Providentia*, nor references to divine awareness of sublunary coming-to-be and passing-away in *de Principiis*,¹⁵² indicate anything more than a general knowledge of the principles governing the process; it is clearly not to be supposed that divine awareness extends to the fortunes of individuals, for Alexander explains the occurrence of evils by the concern of providence with species rather than with individuals, and excludes contingent outcomes from the scope of divine foreknowledge.¹⁵³

The question still remains whether Alexander attributed such knowledge to the *highest* divinity. *De Principiis* appears to do so at one point;¹⁵⁴ Averroes seems to indicate that Alexander did not do so. Nor is it clear how a distinction between Unmoved Movers and sphere-souls is to be fitted into Alexander's account of providence. Are we to suppose, for example, that (i) the Unmoved Mover is unaware of anything outside himself and does not exercise providence, while the sphere-souls, motivated in their movements primarily by desire to be like the Unmoved Mover, are nevertheless also aware of the sublunary world and of the effects of their movements upon it, at least in general terms, so that we can speak of them exercising providence even though the Unmoved Mover does not?¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Alex. *de Prov.* 65.9-67.13 Ruland.

¹⁵¹ Pines 1987; de Koninck 1993-94, 511. Cf. Them. in *Ph.* 33.24-26. (At 34.19-22 the Latin text, at least, says only that god knows that he is the principle of things and of their order, not explicitly that he knows the things themselves; cf. Pines 1987, 186). Above, n. 48. Rist, J.M., 'On Tracking Alexander of Aphrodisias', *AGPh* 48 (1966), 82-90 at 85-86 argues that Plotinus VI 7[38] 37.2-3 refers to Peripatetics who held that the Unmoved Mover knows its products and things inferior to it; cf. Movia 1970, 76.

¹⁵² Alex. *de Princ.* 130.42ff. Badawī 1968 = §85 Genequand 2001; see below, n. 154.

¹⁵³ Cf. Sharples, R.W., *Alexander of Aphrodisias On Fate*, London 1983, 26-27 and references there. I am grateful to Tad Brennan for pressing me on this issue.

¹⁵⁴ Such knowledge is attributed to the sphere-souls at *de Princ.* 130.42ff., Badawī = §85 Genequand, but to the Unmoved Mover at 135.27-9 = §120. (135.2-2 = 114 is an interpolation: Genequand 2001, 162.) See Lloyd 1981, 57-59; Sharples 1982, 207; Genequand 2001, 17, 163.

¹⁵⁵ So Bruns, I., 'Studien zu Alexander von Aphrodisias — III, Lehre von der Vorsehung', *RhM* 45 (1890), 223-235, at 230 (with reference, indeed, only to *Quaest.* I 25; below), Hager, F.P., 'Proklos und Alexander über ein Problem der Vorsehung', in Mansfeld, J. et al., eds., *Kephalaion: Studies in Greek Philosophy... presented to C.J. de Vogel*, Assen 1975, 171-182, at 179 n. 34 (citing Alex. *Quaest.* II.3,

The sphere-souls will then be aware of the Unmoved Mover, but also of things of which it is not aware, which seems problematic; human minds can think of god, and also of things not known to god, because their thinking of any object is intermittent, but this does not apply to the intellects of the spheres.¹⁵⁶ Or should we suppose that (ii) the Unmoved Mover too is aware in general terms of sublunary species and the way in which they are preserved, so that we can legitimately speak of the supreme god as exercising providence? Or should we rather opt, as Ruland does, for the intermediate view, that (iii) the Unmoved Mover exercises conscious providence over the heavens, while they in turn exercise providence over the sublunary¹⁵⁷ — which raises similar problems to (i)? It is difficult to be certain; and this is because Alexander is, it appears, more concerned to establish that there is divine providence for the sublunary than to argue by which divinities precisely it is exercised, or whether it is really appropriate to speak of providential care for the heavens themselves as well.

At *de Prov.* 57.11-14 he refers to 'providence concerning the other things and their preservation, as well as for what on the earth depends therefrom', which does sound like concern of the Unmoved Mover for the heavens and thus consequentially for the earth.¹⁵⁸ And subsequently, at 59.6ff., he refers to care for what is primary in nature *before* attributing to Aristotle a distinction between providence for the heavens and providence for the sublunary, in such a way that both types by implication come under this description.¹⁵⁹ But he then argues that providence is care for the sublunary, and that the heavens, being eternal and well-ordered by their own nature, are not in need of providence, while sublunary things are (61.7ff.).¹⁶⁰ Similarly

II.19, *Fat.* 6 (169.18-171.17), and in *Mete.* 6.5-6 and 7.9-14 — though, with the exception of *Quaest.* II 19 (below), these passages do not refer to the Unmoved Mover as distinct from the heavens at all, so Hager's is really an argument from silence), and Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 61 (cf. 58), citing *Quaest.* I 25 and II 19. Cf. Sharples 1982, 200.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Lloyd 1981, 59.

¹⁵⁷ Ruland 1976, 136, 142; so too Natali, C., *Alessandro di Afrodisia: Il Destino*, Milan 1996, 263. Cf. Sharples 1982, 199.

¹⁵⁸ In spite of my attempts to argue it away at Sharples 1982, 201.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Sharples 1982, 201. The reference here to care for what is primary in nature is however bracketed as misplaced or reworded by Fazzo and Zonta 1999, 139 n. 36.

¹⁶⁰ True, at 63.8-65.8 he claims that sublunary individuals cannot be the primary concern of divine providence; but this is in the context of denying that providence can be either primary or accidental (above, n. 136), and should not, it seems, be read back into the earlier passage in such a way as to imply that in *its* terms the heavens are primary and the sublunary not. Alexander first discusses what are the

in *Quaest.* I 25 we are told that if one accepts a looser definition of providence, so that everything affected by anything is the object of its providence, one could say that the heavens are the object of the providence of the Unmoved Mover, but that if one adopts a narrower definition so that providence implies acting for the sake of something, then the sublunary is the object of the providence of the heavenly body. The implication clearly is that the narrower definition should be accepted. (One may note that I 25 41.4-8 describes the effect of the Unmoved Mover on the heavens in terms that imply no *knowledge* on its part at all.) *Quaest.* II 19 asserts that providence is exercised by one part of the universe over another, argues that the heavens are not in need of providence while the sublunary is, and then says that 'the divine part' of the universe cares for the sublunary. The movement of the heavens is attributed to desire for the Unmoved Mover, referred to as 'the first god' (63.20), but, by contrast with *Quaest.* I 25, it is not described in terms of providence at all, even providence in a broadly defined and improper sense.¹⁶¹

In the Platonism of the second century A.D., which may well have influenced Alexander, we find a hierarchy of three types of providence in which primary providence has the heavens as its object, secondary providence exercised by the heavens is concerned with the preservation of sublunary species, and tertiary providence is concerned with events in the lives of individuals.¹⁶² Alexander might have, by adopting view (iii) above, in effect retained the first two

objects of providence, and then the exact status of providential concern from god's point of view. Already at 57.11-59.3, referring to god's ungrudgingness, he says that everything that depends on the divine *in a primary way* is providentially willed; but he also refers to all such providence as a *secondary* overflowing of the divine nature. Things may be influenced by the divine in a primary way (i.e., at this stage in the argument, non-accidentally?) without this providence being the primary expression of the divine nature. — Fazzo and Wiesner 1993, 139-140 note that the second part of text no. 33 in van Ess, J., 'Über einige neue Fragmente des Alexander von Aphrodisias und des Proklos in arabischer Übersetzung', *Der Islam* 42 (1966), 148-168, attributed to Alexander, supposes that the first cause exercises providence over the heavens directly, and over the sublunary through the heavens as intermediary; but they show that this and other features of this passage reflect elaboration in the circle of al-Kindi rather than Alexander's own text.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Sharples, R.W., 'The Unmoved Mover and the Motion of the Heavens in Alexander of Aphrodisias', *Apeiron* 17 (1983), 62-6, at 62 and n. 14.

¹⁶² [Plu.] *fat.* 572F; Apuleius, *Pl.* 96.9ff. Thomas; Nemes. *nat. hom.* 43 p. 125.21-126.15 Morani. (Nemesius, however, we may note, includes among the objects of primary providence both the heavens and universals, as opposed to sublunary coming-to-be. Compare above, n. 99; Sharples 1983, 142.) The starting-point of the Platonist doctrine is exegesis of *Timaeus* 41-42, and Alexander was, we know, interested in the *Timaeus*; cf. Sharples 1990, 90-92.

types while rejecting the third; indeed, his claim at *de Prov.* 7.21ff. that providential care extending to individuals was the view of the Stoics certainly¹⁶³ and of Plato *according to some people* may indicate some doubt as to whether tertiary providence is correctly attributed to Plato.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand we also find in Platonism of this period a distinction between a highest god who is a mind concerned only with thinking itself, and a secondary deity which looks to the first one in carrying out its task of fashioning the world,¹⁶⁵ which would provide an analogue rather for our view (i).

The question in any case remains whether Alexander, by interpreting providence as the effect of the heavens on the sublunary and insisting that this is a conscious effect, has really answered Atticus' demand for a providence 'that makes a difference to us'. And the answer must be: yes, in that we would not exist were it not for this sort of 'providence'; no, in terms of the sort of concern on the part of the divine that Atticus desired.¹⁶⁶ Alexander's theory of providence avoids making god responsible for evil and imperfection; but it does so at the expense of limiting the scope of providence to an extent where its claim to be providence is called into question. The pattern is familiar, for Alexander's own theory of fate was criticised with some justice by Proclus as 'too weak';¹⁶⁷ ironically enough, Alexander is liable to the charge which he himself, in his treatise on fate, levels against his determinist opponents, of preserving the words but failing to do justice to the concepts they refer to.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ See above, n. 112. Alexander presents his own view of providence as intermediate between this Stoic view and the Epicurean wholesale rejection of divine providence: *de Prov.* 9.2-6, 31.11-21.

¹⁶⁴ Providence concerned only with what is universal is mentioned, but rejected, also at Epict. *Diss.* I 12.2 (referring to concern for what is common rather than individually) and Justin Martyr, *dial.* 1.4 (who refers to concern for species rather than for individuals). On these texts cf. Sharples 1983, 150 and Dobbin 1998, 138; both Epictetus (late 1st-early 2nd century B.C.) and Justin (c.100-165 A.D.) are considerably earlier than Alexander. Wherever the idea of providential concern for species rather than for individuals originated, Alexander's originality may have been chiefly in adopting it for Aristotelian exegesis.

¹⁶⁵ Alcinoüs, *Didascalicus* 10; Numenius, fr. 18. The highest god here is in fact, as Dillon, J.M., *The Middle Platonists*, London 1977, 1996, 283 notes, the Aristotelian Unmoved Mover.

¹⁶⁶ Happ 1968, 83, noting that Alex. *Fat.* 203.10-12 — in a polemical context, indeed — argues that it is better to side with Epicurus than to make god responsible for the evils in the world.

¹⁶⁷ Procl. *in Ti.* III 272.7ff. Diehl.

¹⁶⁸ Alex. *Fat.* 172.9ff. (of chance), 181.10ff., 182.22ff., 183.17ff. (of "what depends on us", τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῖν).

4. Conclusion

This however raises a final and more general question.¹⁶⁹ Why did so many supporters and critics devote so much time to interpreting and debating Aristotle's views on questions that he did not discuss systematically, even when the consequence of doing so was the development of views that may seem neither to do justice to Aristotle nor to be, in the end, philosophically satisfactory?

Certainly cultural pressures, and challenges from other philosophical schools played a part; so too possibly did simple misunderstanding, and the use of second- and third-hand reports. Aristotle himself gives indications at different points in his own works of what the relation between the divine and the sublunary might be, but those indications are neither clear in themselves nor easy to reconcile in a single theory. He had however argued that the universe should not be made up of disconnected parts.¹⁷⁰ Perhaps his followers and interpreters, who tried to consider in more detail how the parts of the universe are connected together, can be seen as, consciously or not, responding to the force of his own suggestion.

"To be an Aristotelian" means, I take it, to be convinced that truth can in principle be achieved by following Aristotle's methods of enquiry, which involved attention to the views of the many and of the wise. For the later Aristotelian Aristotle is, himself, pre-eminent among the wise — and Alexander, at least, held a state-endowed appointment specifically to expound the philosophy of Aristotle. It is not perhaps surprising that, when Aristotle's views seemed to conflict both with those of the many and, perhaps, with anything culturally acceptable or even plausible, tensions result. Of course, one possible reaction would simply be to say — as Philoponus, later on, did¹⁷¹ — that Aristotle is simply *wrong*. Whether saying this excludes one from being considered an Aristotelian is perhaps a matter for debate; but it was a step that many Aristotelians, and especially Alexander, were unwilling to take.

¹⁶⁹ I am particularly grateful to Christopher Rowe for emphasising to me the need to answer this question.

¹⁷⁰ *Metaph.* A 10, 1076a1-4. Ironically enough, it is precisely such disconnectedness that Atticus brings as a charge against the Aristotelian position in fr. 8 des Places.

¹⁷¹ Cf. for example Sharples, R.W., 'If what is earlier, then of necessity what is later? Some ancient discussions of Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione* 2.11', *BICS* 26 (1979), 27-44, at 33-34; Wildberg, C., *John Philoponus' Criticism of Aristotle's Theory of Ether*. Berlin 1988, 144.

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THE ORIGINS OF STOIC GOD

DAVID SEDLEY

Heraclitus of Ephesus said that fire is the element, Thales of Miletus water, Diogenes of Apollonia and Anaximenes air, Empedocles of Acragas fire, air, water and earth, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae the *homoeomeries* of each thing, and the Stoics matter and god.

(Diogenes of Oenoanda fr. 6 I 10-II 9 Smith)

It is easy to be both impressed and puzzled by the decision of the Stoics to nominate 'god' as one of the two constitutive principles of the world. On the one hand, the doctrine sets up Stoic pantheism from the very outset with a breathtaking decisiveness, enabling god to enter the physical world on the ground floor. On the other hand, it may look like a doctrine appearing suddenly and mysteriously on the scene, with no pre-history to lend it either credibility or even a clear philosophical meaning.

The Stoic god is the single cause of everything, himself a body and immanent throughout all the world's matter. He is, further, a supremely intelligent, good and provident being who plans and necessitates the world's entire development from beginning to end. This is a remarkable job-description for any deity. Most individual aspects of it no doubt had precedents of some sort. God's immanence and corporeality had antecedents in such fifth-century philosophers as Heraclitus and Diogenes of Apollonia, even though comparable views had as far as we know been absent from fourth-century thought. God's providential goodness had reportedly been endorsed by the Stoic hero Socrates¹ and thereafter well established in the Platonic tradition. Thus, even though these same views were flatly rejected by Aristotle — frequently, if controversially, seen as a major formative influence on Stoic physics² — they were certainly available from the Socratic-Platonic tradition. On the other hand, it is hard to

¹ X. *Mem.* I 4.5-18, IV 3.2-18 (cf. Long 1988, 20-1); Pl. *Phd.* 97c-99c.

² This view was fully defended by Hahm 1977, and made controversial by Sandbach 1985, esp. ch. 6. See most recently the balanced reflections of Long 1998, 375-9.

find any philosophical antecedents at all for the idea that god is not merely in some sense the ultimate cause, but also the determining cause of every single event in the world's history.³ And this role is closely dependent on god's status in Stoic cosmology as an immanent force pervading all matter.

Clearly, then, if we are to understand the Stoic identification of god as a principle, matter and god must be taken as a pair. And it is perhaps the inclusion of 'matter', ὕλη, more than any other single feature of Stoic physics, that has encouraged scholars to postulate an Aristotelian background to it. The main alternative, developed by H.-J. Krämer⁴ in particular, is to see the twin-principle doctrine as emerging from a primarily Platonic background. I have no doubt that the doctrine is a close relative of both, but one implication of my conclusions in this paper will be that its most direct inspiration lay in late fourth-century Platonism, with the *Timaeus* its primary ancestor. In my view — although I will not have space to argue the point adequately here — its Aristotelian affinities, such as they are, may be best explained by the fact that Aristotelian physics had itself similarly emerged from debates within the Academy. Stoic physics, if I am right, has Plato as its grandfather but Aristotle as its uncle.

While I am to a large extent in sympathy with Krämer's conclusions, my own argument will turn on two key texts — one from Theophrastus, the other from Cicero — which Krämer barely considers. The first is Theophrastus fr. 230 FHS&G⁵ (Simplicius, *in Phys.* 26.7-15):

But Theophrastus, having first given a historical account of the others, adds: 'These were followed by Plato, who preceded them in reputation and ability, although chronologically he was later. He devoted the greater part of his work to first philosophy, but also paid attention to appearances, trying his hand at physical inquiry. In this inquiry he wants to make the principles two in number: one which underlies, in the role of matter, which he calls 'all-receiving' (τὸ μὲν ὑποκείμενον, ὡς ὕλην, ὃ προσαγορεύει πανδεχές), the other in the role of cause and mover, which he connects with the power of god and with that of the good (τὸ δὲ ὡς αἴτιον καὶ κινεῶν, ὃ περιάπτει τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῇ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δυνάμει).'

³ See esp. Sen. *Ep.* 65.2. Xenophanes B25, ἀλλ' ἀπάνευθε πόνοιο νόου φρενὶ πάντα κραδαίνει is open to such a reading, but he was not normally so interpreted in the ancient tradition.

⁴ Krämer 1971, 108-31.

⁵ FHS&G = Fortenbaugh et al. 1992.

This is a vital and under-appreciated text.⁶ Theophrastus quite explicitly attributes two physical principles to Plato, and the first of them, which he casts in the role of matter, is unmistakably the receptacle of the *Timaeus* — described there as ‘all-receiving’ at 51a7. Theophrastus is, indeed, very careful to distinguish Plato’s designation of it from his own (Aristotelian) characterisation of it as ‘matter’. When it comes to the second principle, then, we should expect similar care. This time Theophrastus offers us no Platonic name for it, but just his own (Aristotelian) description of it as, in effect, the world’s moving cause. The most he is prepared to say about Plato’s own usage with regard to it is that Plato connects it ‘with the power of god and with that of the good’.

There is a striking disparity between these two aspects of the report. The account of the material principle sounds like a digest of the *Timaeus* such as any Aristotelian might have formulated in Theophrastus’ own day. That of the causal principle, by contrast, is anything but a direct report of the same dialogue. It is not clear even whether the ‘god’ in question is the demiurge or the world-soul, let alone what specific Platonic passage or passages we may be being referred to. Even less obvious, at first sight, is how Theophrastus has got the number of Platonic principles down to a stark two, thus apparently excluding any role for the Forms.

These are questions to which we will return. But for now we must broach the question, what *kind* of report are we dealing with? Fairly clearly, it is no simple paraphrase of the *Timaeus*, but a constructive interpretation of Plato’s physical principles, whether by Theophrastus himself or by his source. Now to some extent we must inevitably see Theophrastus’ own hand at work in it. For Theophrastus’ recorded interpretation of Parmenides’ physics is so close as to guarantee that he saw Plato as in direct line of descent from Parmenides (fr. 227C FHS&G):

This man [Xenophanes] was followed by Parmenides of Elea, son of Pyres, who took both paths. For he both declares that the all is eternal, and tries to account for the generation of the things there

⁶ It is considered by Krämer 1971 only briefly, 120 n. 62. I have myself argued its importance in ‘Chrysippus on psychophysical causality’, in J. Brunschwig, M. Nussbaum (ed.), *Passions and Perceptions*, Cambridge 1993, 313–31, at 325; Sedley 1998, 76–7; and ‘Theophrastus and Epicurean Physics’, in Ophuisen/Raalte 1998, 331–54, at 349; see also Sharples 1995, 59–72, Long 1998, 377, Reydam-Schils 1999, 44–5.

are, holding different views about the two. So far as truth is concerned, he holds the all to be one, ungenerated and spherical. But so far as the opinion of the many is concerned, in order to account for the generation of appearances, he makes the principles two in number, namely fire and earth, the one as matter, the other as cause and agent.

Parmenides' immediate forerunner Xenophanes had, according to Theophrastus (fr. 224 FHS&G) been a monist who identified his one principle with god. Parmenides, we have now seen, may have aligned himself with Xenophanes' monism so far as the 'truth' was concerned, but, exploiting Xenophanes' distinction between truth and opinion, also analysed the realm of δόξα, finding there one active and one passive principle. The active principle is identified with the fiery element, but also, we may infer, with the creative goddess of Parmenides' *Doxa*, since according to Diogenes Laertius' summary of the same Theophrastean passage (fr. 227D FHS&G = D.L. IX 21-2) the active principle, fire, was assigned the role of 'craftsman' (δημιουργός).

Against this background, Theophrastus' presentation of Plato's physics can be much better understood. Plato's separation of physics from metaphysics emerged from Parmenides' separation of *Doxa* from *Aletheia*, and his twin physical principles play the respectively active and passive roles which had already been assigned by Parmenides to his own two elements. If, furthermore, Plato in Theophrastus' eyes associates his active principle with god, that is the culmination of a tradition in which Xenophanes had first identified his single undifferentiated principle with god, and Parmenides had subsequently differentiated this into an active and passive principle, assigning a divine creative role to the former.⁷

⁷ The Theophrastean context can probably be more fully reconstructed from the physical doxography at Cic. *Ac.* II 118, whose Theophrastean origin has long been recognised (e.g. H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci*, Berlin 1879, 121; Mansfeld 1989, 151). After following one tradition from Thales to Anaxagoras, Cicero then goes back to Xenophanes and his successors: (a) Xenophanes postulated an unchanging unity, which he identified with god; (b) Parmenides postulated fire, which imparts motion and form to earth; (c) Leucippus and Democritus posited the full and the empty, (d) Empedocles the four elements, (e) Heraclitus fire, and (f) Melissus an infinite everlasting being; finally (g) Plato held that the world had been created by god out of an all-receiving matter, to last for ever. Here (a), (b) and (g) are recognisable from our Theophrastean material, and Theophrastus fr. 229 FHS&G confirms that (c) Leucippus and Democritus were placed by him in this same succession. But it is unnecessary to expect a developmental story which will unite all

To some extent Theophrastus is here developing a story already sketched by Aristotle. The latter had, for example, likewise implied a reading of Parmenides' physics in terms of an active and a passive principle, and had at times even reduced Plato's world-view to a two-principle structure. However, the two principles in question were in Plato's case a material and a *formal* (rather than efficient) cause.⁸ Theophrastus' reading of Plato goes well beyond anything to be found in Aristotle, especially in its very clear indication of the *Timaeus* as the crucial text for his two-principle scheme. What motivated so explicit an exegetical innovation?

It is hard to imagine Theophrastus imposing a procrustean re-interpretation on Plato merely in order to make him the natural heir to Xenophanes and Parmenides. Plato was not only Theophrastus' own first teacher, but also in many ways the most prominent thinker of the fourth century, and this makes such an *ad hoc* rewriting of his central doctrines far from likely. Rather, the dualist reading of Plato's physics that we find in Theophrastus is likely to be one which had at least some independent currency in the closing decades of the fourth century, even though it may be Theophrastus' own idea to provide it with a Presocratic ancestry.⁹ If so, an obvious place to look is the Academy. This refashioning of Plato's ideas might easily be the work of Platonists, committed to developing and elaborating his physics as their own. And whose interpretation of Plato is Theophrastus, in turn, more likely have heeded than Plato's present representatives in the Academy?

The dualist physics which we have encountered is not readily attributed to Speusippus on the evidence available. On the other

of (a)-(g) under a single thematic link.

⁸ See esp. *Met. A*: Parmenides at 984b1-8, Plato at 988a7-17. Dualist interpretations which posit a material plus an efficient cause, although they have antecedents in Aristotle (cf. *ib.* 987a2-13) seem to be Theophrastus' trademark: as in his construal of Anaxagoras, fr. 228A FHS&G, on which cf. Mansfeld 1992, 271.

⁹ Given Theophrastus' long lifespan — he died *c.* 287 — the doxographical work in question could in principle belong even to the early third century. But in Sedley 1998, chs. IV and VI I have argued that at least his *Physical Opinions* was available early enough for Epicurus to use it in the last decade of the fourth century, and I know of no reason to suspect that his interpretation of Plato's physics was a very late addition to his doxographical work. At all events, any suggestion that in his extreme old age he was so impressed by Stoic physics as to re-interpret the *Timaeus* in its light, and to rewrite a significant part of his Presocratic doxography to match, would defy all credulity.

hand, it has certain affinities with what little is known of Xenocrates' physics, as we shall see. But whether it represents Xenocrates himself, or a subsequent development of his physics, is a question we must consider further, and this means asking what became of Academic physics in the generation after Xenocrates, who died in 314 BC. Now it is generally assumed that we have no chance of recovering the physical views of Xenocrates' successor Polemo (head of the Academy 314-270 BC), if indeed he had any physical views of his own. This is the assumption which I wish to challenge. I shall argue (a) that we do still have, in outline, the physics of Polemo's Academy (however large or small Polemo's own original contribution to it may have been);¹⁰ (b) that this physics has, at the very least, strong affinities with the one on which Theophrastus was relying; and (c) that it is in turn the immediate forerunner of the Stoic physics developed by Polemo's own long-time pupil Zeno.

Where, then, is this reborn Platonic physics to be found? In Cicero, *Academica* I 24-9. In the surviving part of this book, Varro sets out a history of philosophy explicitly borrowed from Antiochus of Ascalon.¹¹ This includes a summary of the doctrines held by the early Academy, and, in particular, a surprisingly elaborate account of their physical doctrines.

Now it is very important to bear in mind whom Antiochus means by the early Academy. He saw himself as rescuing the Platonic tradition from the two centuries of suppression which it had undergone after falling into the hands of sceptics in the 260s BC. Consequently — to judge from his ethics, the best-documented area of his work — he advocated a return not so much to Plato himself as to the true Platonic tradition in the most fully developed form that it had achieved before the rot set in.¹² This culmination had been under the Academy's last major doctrinal head, Polemo, and therefore

¹⁰ The three leading Platonists of the day — leaving aside the young Arcesilaus — were Polemo, Crates and Crantor (Cic. *Ac.* I 34). Crantor, as we shall see, only partially shared the school's mainstream physical views, but we should not overlook the possibility that Crates and others contributed.

¹¹ For two comprehensive recent accounts of Antiochus, see Barnes 1989 and Görler 1994.

¹² This is not to deny that the direct study of at least some Platonic dialogues was included in Antiochus' curriculum. In 'The Ethics of Brutus and Cassius', *JRS* 87 (1997), 41-53, I try to show that Brutus' studies as an Antiochean included a close reading of the *Politicus*.

Antiochus' ethical stance was above all presented as a reversion to Polemo's, founded on conformity to nature but, in strong contrast to the Stoic heresies of Polemo's pupil Zeno, insisting that nature recommends non-moral as well as moral goods. Varro's presentation of the early Academy's ethics in *Academica* I 19-23 is manifestly focused on this Polemonian ethics, and makes no pretence of a return to the unmediated writings of Plato himself. I do not mean to suggest that there is anything positively un-Platonic in this passage, and Antiochus may well have regarded Polemo's as no more than the most fully articulated account of what the Platonists from Plato onwards had all actually meant. But it is clearly Polemo's agenda, not Plato's, that dictates its contents.¹³

The 'they' to whom Varro proceeds to attribute the Platonist physics in 24-9 are explicitly these same Platonists,¹⁴ and I can see no reason to doubt that the views of the early Academy, to which 'they' formally refers throughout, continue here to be presented from a primarily Polemonian perspective (I shall however save till later my specific evidence that the physics represents an outlook postdating those of Plato, Speusippus and Xenocrates). It is true that virtually nothing in the way of physical doctrine has reached us under the express name of Polemo — in fact we have just the single report that, according to Polemo, 'the world is (a) god'.¹⁵ However, even this one snippet of information is of the utmost relevance to our topic. The identification of god not only with the active physical principle, but also with the world as a whole, is a well-known thesis of Stoic physics, and therefore so far as it goes this fragment is fully consistent with the hypothesis that Stoic cosmology stemmed from that of Polemo. Moreover, it is an equivalence that can be extracted directly from Plato's *Timaeus* (34a-b, 55d, 68e, 92a). We thus cannot afford to ignore the possibility — which I shall be fully developing in this paper — that Polemo's Academy served as the bridge between that seminal Platonic dialogue and the physics of his own pupil Zeno.

¹³ Antiochus considered his ethics to be Aristotelian as well as Polemonian (Cic. *Fin.* V 14, *Ac.* II 131), but as represented in Cic. *Fin.* V he reveals very little actual knowledge of Aristotelian ethics.

¹⁴ *Ib.* 23-4: 'haec quidem fuit apud eos morum institutio et eius partis quam primam posui forma atque descriptio. de natura autem (id enim sequebatur) ita dicebant ut...'

¹⁵ Polemo fr. 121 Gigante (M. Gigante, 'Polemonis Academici Fragmenta', *Rendic. Archeol./Lettere e Belle Arti Nap.* 51 (1976), 91-144) = Aetius I 7.29.

That the *Timaeus* was intensively studied in the Academy not only under Xenocrates but also in the era of Polemo's headship is known from Plutarch's *On the Generation of Soul in the Timaeus*, which cites substantial exegetical material from both Xenocrates and Crantor — the latter, a philosophically independent member of Polemo's Academy, being the author of the first commentary on the dialogue.¹⁶

Why then has *Academica* I 24-9 not been welcomed by scholars as a precious insight into Platonist physics in the very years in which Stoicism evolved? Because they have always taken it to represent nothing more than Antiochus' unhistorical retrojection onto the early Academy of what is in reality just Stoic physics.¹⁷ There seem to me to be very strong reasons for disagreeing with this.

While the enterprise of so construing philosophical history as to legitimise his own position was undoubtedly characteristic of Antiochus, we would need to know what motive he might have had, in this particular case, for resorting to historical fiction. Since we know next to nothing about his own physical views, that is no easy question to answer. But there is no reason, either general or specific to this passage, why we should expect any falsification here. Varro's entire philosophical history (*Ac.* I 15-42) is, in every aspect for which we can administer an independent check, very far from being a falsification. The one, repeated claim which will strike most of us as manifestly unsatisfactory is that the old Academy and the Peripatos were *de facto* one and the same school (18, 22). But at both its occurrences Varro is quite honest about the perspective from which he feels the claim is legitimised: on the classification of goods, a topic of absolutely pivotal importance to any Antiochean, the Platonists and Peripatetics were in agreement. When on the other hand it comes to Aristotle's rejection

¹⁶ See Mette 1984 for Crantor's fragments. Crantor cannot himself be the author of our Academic physics: like Xenocrates, but apparently unlike Varro's Academics (see below p. 69), he defended the eternity of the world (fr. 10(3) Mette).

¹⁷ Notably Reid 1885 *ad loc.*; Dörrie 1987, 472-7; Görler 1990, 1994, 949-51; Lévy 1992, 552-6; Gucker 1997, 86; Reydam-Schils 1999, 128-32, and even Krämer 1971, 11 n. 6. The Stoicising reading is shared also by Dillon 1977, 81-8, who does however offer an excellent account of the passage's relation to the *Timaeus*. Giusta 1986, 157, surprisingly calls it 'più *peripatetica* che *platonica*' (my emphasis). In Sedley 1998, 75-82 I sketched a forerunner of the present argument, proposing that the Academic theory reported by Varro, and not Stoic physics, was the original target of Epicurus' critiques reflected in Lucretius I 1052-1113 and V 156-234: cf. nn. 58, 88, below.

of the theory of Forms, to Theophrastus' ethical innovations, and to Strato's exclusive concentration on physics, Varro is equally ready to brand them as deserters from the Platonist camp (33-4). There is nothing either simplistic or palpably dishonest about this evaluation.

So what *is* the evidence for his untrustworthiness? Paradoxically, more than any other item of evidence it is the very passage in question, Varro's summary of old Academic physics in *Academica* book I, that scholars have judged to be so obviously an opportunistic fiction as to prove their case for Antiochus' dishonesty. But that assumption of the passage's falsity is exactly what I am now calling into question.

With regard to Stoicism, Antiochus' position is actually quite a complex one. He is neither a Stoic himself, nor opposed to the Stoics on every issue. It would be nearer the truth to say that he considers the Platonists to be the real philosophical giants, and the Stoics to be dwarves on their shoulders. On some questions of absolutely central philosophical importance the Stoics have distorted, disguised under a new terminology, or even (in the case of the classification of goods) altogether betrayed the true Platonist position. In a few matters, however, especially epistemology, their vantage point on the giants' shoulders has enabled them to see further, and in these cases Varro is quite ready to admit the fact. Thus in epistemology the early Platonists were systematically and radically anti-empirical (30-2), leaving it for Zeno to vindicate the senses (40-2); and on this question Antiochus had no qualms about defending Zeno's position, as we know well from *Academica* book two, without the slightest pretence that it had already been developed by Plato.¹⁸ Why, given this flexibility of approach, should Antiochus have felt uniquely compelled to resort to historical fiction when it came to physics? His lack of a motive for doing so is confirmed by chapter 39, where Varro shows no embarrassment about listing points on which Zeno's physics departed from the positions of the old Academy and the Peripatos.

Cicero more than once indicates that Antiochus did not consider physics as important a part of philosophy as either ethics or

¹⁸ Lévy 1992, 187-9 assumes that Varro is committing himself, and thus also Antiochus, to the anti-empiricist position of the early Academy. On this assumption, as Lévy observes, major problems would follow regarding consistency with book two. But I see no evidence that Varro is indicating any such commitment; cf. Gucker 1997, 72-3.

epistemology.¹⁹ Correspondingly, despite assigning spokesmen for Antiochus' epistemology in the *Academica* and for his ethics in the *De finibus*, he does not in the *De natura deorum* so much as hint at the possibility of including an Antiochean physics.²⁰ In fact, he appears even to have had some difficulty in finding out what physical theory Antiochus actually endorsed. Speaking in his own voice in book two of the *Academica*, he is to all appearances uninformed about Antiochus' physical allegiance, and pretends for his present dialectical purposes that an Antiochean will simply borrow his physics from the Stoa.²¹ It is only in book one (written after book two, and apparently therefore better informed) that he implicitly acknowledges Antiochus' commitment to the physics of the early Academy.²² Given, then, the very low profile of physics within Antiochus' system, it

¹⁹ Cf. Barnes 1989, 82; Görler 1994, 949. Antiochus (*Ac.* II 29) is said to have considered the two main concerns of philosophy to be the criterion of truth and the ethical goal (with the latter, ethics, the most important of all: *ib.* I 34, *Fin.* V 15). In *Fin.* V, although Antiochean ethics requires the study of nature (44), it approaches this subject (esp. 33-43) with an agenda — the analysis of human nature — which enables it to remain avowedly neutral as between theistic and mechanistic cosmologies (33), despite an undisguised sympathy for the former (shared by Cicero when speaking with an at least partly Antiochean voice at *Fin.* IV 11-13).

²⁰ Nor will it be an adequate explanation of this silence to suggest that Antiochus' physics was tantamount to Stoic physics. The same could have been said about his epistemology, but that does not stop its being attached to his name in the *Academica*.

²¹ At *Ac.* II 118 the dualistic Platonic physics is just one of many among which the Antiochean sage (*vester sapiens*) will have to choose. At 119 Cicero helps himself to the assumption (on which he then relies down to 128) that the Antiochean sage will opt for Stoic physics, but only by means of an inference from the mischievous and blatantly simplistic premise *quoniam Stoicus est*. If he had genuinely believed that the Antiocheans actually declared an allegiance to Stoic physics, he would not have needed to rely on so opportunistic an inference. Conversely, if he had been sure that they adopted the 'Platonist' physics outlined by Varro, he ought not to have made the inference at all. It is worth adding *Fin.* IV 36 (whose importance has been emphasised by Dillon 1977, 83-4), where Cicero, thought to be speaking as an Antiochean, declares his conviction that the mind is a kind of body. This might seem to favour the hypothesis that Antiochus adopted Stoic physics, since at *Ac.* I 39 he presents this very thesis as a Stoic innovation with respect to the old Academy; but in fact the position is not so clear cut, see below pp. 80-2

²² This becomes evident only from Varro's remarks at *Ac.* I 6, on which see p. 70 below. The actual account of old Academic physics at 24-9 does not in itself indicate Antiochus' own adhesion to it, and scholars have been hasty in labelling the passage 'Antiochus' physics' *vel sim.* Lévy 1992, 552 correctly calls it "La physique de l'Ancienne Académie selon Antiochus".

becomes even harder to supply him with a credible motive for the alleged falsification.

If some react with incredulity to my unfamiliar portrayal of Antiochus as a trustworthy historian, the likely original context of his historical survey may help counteract their disbelief. This context is widely thought to have been Antiochus' dialogue *Sosus*, which, if so, probably opened with the scene famously described by Lucullus in *Academica* II 11-12. Antiochus reacted angrily to the new books by Philo of Larissa which had recently arrived from Rome, and apparently went so far as to brand Philo a 'liar' for his historical thesis of the unity of the Academy. Antiochus' own historical survey, as we have it from Varro's mouth, may have been in large measure a calculated response to Philo, and, if so, it would be understandable if he was readier than usual to concede and even emphasise divergences of opinion within the Socratic-Platonic tradition, as we do in fact see him doing in Varro's speech.²³ A good example is the radical philosophical distinction which he makes between Socrates and Plato (*Ac.* I 17 *fin.*), a distinction that most modern scholars would endorse, but one which is to the best of my knowledge unique within the ancient Platonist tradition. More important for our purposes is the consideration that, so far as any falsification of the record is concerned, one would expect Antiochus to have been on his best behaviour in writing this survey. In a situation where he was trying to show up Philo's historical 'lies', and might expect Philo or his supporters to respond, it would have been madness for him to resort to unnecessary historical fabrications of his own. Nor does it seem that his account of Platonist physics did in the event incur any counter-charge of lying. At any rate, Cicero replying to the Antiocheans on behalf of the New Academy at *Ac.* II 118 has no qualms about attributing the same two-principle theory to Plato himself.²⁴

Antiochus must then, at the very least, be presumed innocent until proven guilty. His condemnation will have to be secured, if at all, by

²³ If I am right in 'Sextus Empiricus and the Atomist Criteria of Truth', *Elenchos* 13 (1992), 21-56, that Antiochus' *Canonica* is the main source of S.E. *M.* VII 141-260, that work may be more properly accused of including historical distortions, including rather strained attempts (141-5) to find an anticipatory hint of Stoic κατάληψις in the term περιληπτόν at *Ti.* 27d, and, more generally, to find in a very disparate series of thinkers a common commitment to ἐνάργεια as a criterion.

²⁴ Cf. note 7 above for the apparently Theophrastean doxography of which this forms a part.

closely scrutinising the details of his report . But it is precisely there that I think his truthfulness can be most effectively vindicated. There are a number of ways in which the report differs significantly from Stoic physics, and in nearly every such case the difference lies in a closer proximity to the ideas of the *Timaeus*. The obvious explanation is that we really are here encountering a physical system which, historically speaking, served as a link between the *Timaeus* and Stoicism.

One favourite ground that has been offered for denying the report's veracity is that it reduces the physics of the *Timaeus* to just two principles, one active and the other passive, and that this is just too obviously a Stoic importation to be taken seriously.²⁵ But the objection fails: it is undermined by the Theophrastus fragment with which we opened, and which shows that the two-principle reading of Plato must have already been current before Stoicism had even arrived on the scene.²⁶ Nevertheless, there could still prove to be *other* elements in it which, while they are authentically Stoic, had no previous track record in Platonism. There are in fact several possible such cases, and I shall attempt, in relation to each as we come to it, to show that it did in fact have a legitimate place within the debates of the fourth-century Academy. First however we must turn to the text. (To facilitate discussion I shall introduce my own line numbering.)

²⁵ Notably Görler 1994, 950; Lévy 1992, 553-4.

²⁶ Sharples 1995, 73, well comments on D.L. III 69 (see n. 42): "... the parallel with Theophrastus shows that we should not too readily assume that every Stoic-sounding interpretation of Plato or Aristotle in the first century B.C. is simply to be put down to wholesale borrowing of Stoic materials by Antiochus."

1 (24) de natura autem (id enim
 sequebatur) ita dicebant ut eam
 dividerent in res duas, ut altera esset
 efficiens, altera autem quasi huic se
 5 praebens, eaque efficeretur aliquid. in
 eo quod efficeret vim esse censebant, in
 eo autem quod efficeretur tantum modo
 materiam quandam; in utroque tamen
 utrumque: neque enim materiam ipsam
 10 cohaerere potuisse si nulla vi
 contineretur, neque vim sine aliqua
 materia; nihil est enim quod non alicubi
 esse cogatur. sed quod ex utroque, id
 iam corpus et quasi qualitatem
 15 quandam nominabant. [...]

(26) earum igitur qualitatum sunt
 aliae principes aliae ex his ortae.
 principes sunt unius modi et simplices;
 ex his autem ortae variae sunt et quasi
 20 multiformes. itaque aer (hoc quoque
 utimur enim pro Latino) et ignis et
 aqua et terra prima sunt; ex his autem
 ortae animantium formae earumque
 rerum quae gignuntur e terra.
 25 ergo illa initia et ut e Graeco vertam
 elementa dicuntur; e quibus aer et ignis
 movendi vim habent et efficiendi,
 reliquae partes accipiendi et quasi
 patiendi, aquam dico et terram. quantum
 30 genus, e quo essent astra mentesque,
 singulare eorumque quattuor quae
 supra dixi dissimile Aristoteles
 quoddam esse rebatur.

(27) sed subiectam putant omnibus
 35 sine ulla specie atque carentem omni
 illa qualitate (faciamus enim tractando
 usitatus hoc verbum et tritius)
 materiam quandam, ex qua omnia
 expressa atque effecta sint, quae tota

When it came to nature, which they treated next, they spoke in such a way as to divide it into two things, so that one was active, the other at this one's disposal, as it were, and acted upon by it in some way. In the active one they held that there was a power, in the one which was acted upon just a kind of matter. But they said that each of the two was present in the other. For neither would matter have been able to cohere if held together by no power, nor would a power be able to cohere without some matter, since there is nothing which is not compelled to be somewhere or other. That which consisted of both was already, in their parlance, 'body' and, so to speak, a sort of 'quality'. [...]

(26) Of those 'qualities', then, some are primary, others derivative from these. The primary ones are each of a single kind and simple, while the ones derivative from them are various and, so to speak, multiform. Thus air (for this too we use as a Latin word), fire, water and earth are primary, while derivative from them are the forms of animals and of the things which grow out of the earth.

Hence those things are called the principles and (to translate from the Greek) the elements. From them air and fire have their power to move and act, while the other parts — I mean water and earth — have their power to receive and, as it were, to be acted upon. Aristotle believed there to be a certain fifth kind, of which stars and minds consisted, one which was unique and unlike those four which I have already mentioned.

(27) But underlying everything, without any form, and devoid of all that 'quality' (for let us make this word more ordinary and familiar by using it), they hold there to be a certain matter, out of which all things have been shaped and brought about. This matter as a whole has the

40 omnia accipere possit omnibusque
 modis mutari atque ex omni parte
 eoque etiam interire, non in nihilum sed
 in suas partes, quae infinite secari ac
 dividi possint, cum sit nihil omnino in
 45 rerum natura minimum quod dividi
 nequeat. quae autem moveantur omnia
 intervallis moveri, quae intervalla item
 infinite dividi possint; (28) et cum ita
 moveatur illa vis quam qualitatem esse
 50 diximus, et cum sic ultro citroque
 versetur, et materiam ipsam totam
 penitus commutari putant et illa effici
 quae appellant qualia; e quibus in omni
 natura cohaerente et continuata cum
 55 omnibus suis partibus unum effectum
 esse mundum, extra quem nulla pars
 materiae sit nullumque corpus.
 partis autem esse mundi omnia quae
 insint in eo, quae natura sentiente
 60 teneantur, in qua ratio perfecta insit,
 quae sit eadem sempiterna (nihil enim
 valentius esse a quo intereat); (29) quam
 vim animum esse dicunt mundi,
 eandemque esse mentem sapientiamque
 65 perfectam, quem deum appellant,
 omniumque rerum quae sunt ei
 subiectae quasi prudentiam quandam
 procurantem caelestia maxime, deinde in
 terris ea quae pertineant ad homines;
 70 quam interdum eandem necessitatem
 appellant, quia nihil aliter possit atque ab
 ea constitutum sit inter quasi fatalem et
 immutabilem continuationem ordinis
 sempiterni, non numquam quidem
 75 eandem fortunam, quod efficiat multa
 improvisa et necopinata nobis propter
 obscuritatem ignoracionemque
 causarum.

capacity to receive everything, and to be changed
 in all ways and in every part, and also even to
 perish — not into nothing, but into its own parts,
 which can be infinitely cut and divided, since there
 is absolutely nothing in the nature of things which
 is smallest, such that it cannot be divided. All
 things that move, they hold, are moved over
 intervals, and those intervals likewise can be
 infinitely divided; (28) and since this is the way in
 which that power which we have identified as
 'quality' moves, and since this is how it fluctuates
 to and fro, they hold both that matter itself as a
 whole undergoes complete change, and that those
 things which they call 'qualia' are brought about.
 It is from these last that, in a nature which as a
 whole coheres and forms a continuum with all its
 parts, a single world has been brought about.
 Outside that world there is no portion of matter,
 and no body.

All the things which are contained in the world
 are, they say, parts of it. They are under the control
 of a sentient nature, which contains perfect reason,
 and which is also eternal, there being nothing
 stronger than it to destroy it. (29) This power they
 identify with the world soul, and also with intellect,
 and with the perfect wisdom which they call god,
 and with a sort of providence, as it were, over all
 the things which fall under its control, one which
 above all governs the things in the heavens, but
 secondarily, on the earth, those things which relate
 to mankind. Sometimes they also call it 'necessity',
 because nothing can be otherwise than has
 been established by it amidst what is, as it were,
 the fated and unchangeable continuation of
 an everlasting order. Sometimes too they call it
 luck, because it produces many things which to us
 are unforeseen and unexpected because of the
 obscurity of their causes and our ignorance of
 them.

We may start with a look at the nomenclature for the twin principles, one active and the other passive. As a pair, these are said to have been explicitly called both ‘principles’ (*initia* 25 = ἀρχαί) and ‘elements’ (*elementa* 26 = στοιχεῖα). Taken separately, however, neither appears to have a single, fixed name. The passive item is said to contain a sort of ‘matter’ (*materia* 8), and thereafter is even referred to as itself ‘(a sort of) matter’, although there is no indication that this was its formal name. Nor is there any clearer indication what name, if any, was given to the active principle as such. (What is made clear rather is that ‘quality’ — *qualitas* = ποιότης — is a technical term to which the Old Academics themselves gave particular emphasis; I shall deal with this term later on.)

The terminological interchangeability of ‘principle’ and ‘element’ is certainly a non-Stoic feature,²⁷ and one which it might be a little surprising to find anybody maintaining by the first century BC. It is on the other hand an equivalence explicitly sanctioned in the *Timaeus* (48b-c). By contrast with those who tried to retroject the later distinction between ‘principles’ and elements’ onto Plato (Aetius I 2), our source comes over as one historically very close to the *Timaeus* itself.

The text’s reticence about naming the material principle likewise follows the lead of the *Timaeus*, where the corresponding substrate is variously alluded to as ‘receptacle’ (ὑποδοχή, 49a, 51a), ‘mother’ (50d), ‘plasticene’ (ἐκμαγεῖον, 50c), ‘space’ (χώρα, 52a), and ‘all-receiving’ (πανδεχές, 51a). This last is in effect translated in line 40 of our text, ‘omnia accipere possit’, while the image of it as a wax matrix on which shapes are impressed (*Tim.* 50c, διασχηματιζόμενον, cf. *ib.* τυπωθέντα, 50d ἐκτυπούμενον) is probably picked up by *expressa* in line 39. Like the *Timaeus*, so too this Academic summary is addressed to people not fully familiar with a single technical term for matter.

But the passage does nevertheless make some use of the word *materia*. On the assumption that *materia* translates ὕλη, it may legitimately be wondered whether this originally Aristotelian term had acquired any currency in the Academy during the fourth century. We have no explicit evidence either that it had or that it had not, and Sandbach, in a measured discussion of the same question,²⁸

²⁷ D.L. VII 134: διαφέρειν δέ φασιν ἀρχὰς καὶ στοιχεῖα. The ‘principles’ are matter and god, the ‘elements’ are the traditional four cosmic stuffs, generated out of these.

²⁸ Sandbach 1985, 35-7.

ends up by suspending judgement. At all events, we should note that in our text ‘matter’ is not functioning as the technical designation of the receptacle. The receptacle is ‘a kind of matter’ (lines 8 and 38, ‘materiam quandam’),²⁹ and to find out *what* kind of matter it is we must read its full description.³⁰ It seems almost certain that at least this relatively loose usage of the term had, by the late fourth century, escaped from the Peripatos and become general philosophical currency. For one thing, the earliest occurrence of ὕλη in the sense ‘matter’ is in fact not in Aristotle but in Plato’s *Philebus* (54c2). For another, despite our almost total lack of non-Peripatetic philosophical texts from the late fourth century, it should be enough to note that ὕλη is used twice by Epicurus in his *Letter to Pythocles*, which I date around 304 BC³¹ and which undoubtedly abridges material from writings of Epicurus several years older. In this letter he tentatively attributes certain astronomical phenomena to the presence (93) or absence (112) of ‘suitable matter’ (ὕλη ἐπιτηδεύα), and there is no likelihood in either case of an intended Aristotelian allusion. Hence I see no reason to deny that the cautious and generic use of ‘matter’ in Cicero’s report, even if it is taken to translate ὕλη, could reflect the parlance of the Polemonian Academy.

It is important, however, to take note of a further and perhaps better option.³² Although there need be little doubt that in Cicero

²⁹ It is true (cf. Reid 1885, 119, cf. 121) that *quidam* is sometimes used in Varro’s speech to qualify or apologise for an unfamiliar translation from the Greek, probable examples being 24 *quasi qualitatem quandam* and 29 *quasi prudentiam quandam* (although in both cases *quasi* undoubtedly does much of the work), and 41 *proprium quandam declarationem earum rerum quae viderentur* (although it is unclear what Greek word is translated: certainly not ἐνέργεια, as Reid and others suggest, since by this time Cicero had settled on a different solution to translating this term — see II 17 from the earlier *Academica priora* — which in any case cannot be construed with an objective genitive). But exceptions include 21 ‘partem quandam’ and ‘humana quadam societate’, and, in my opinion, 20 ‘progressio quaedam ad virtutem appellatur’. As regards ‘materiam quandam’, the fact that the identical expression is repeated later in the same passage virtually excludes the explanation that *quandam* is a mere apology for the translation. Besides, *materia* is a common term in Cicero, and Varro has in fact already used it, without a hint of apology, at *Ac.* I 6.

³⁰ This generic use of *materia*, to designate whatever stuff is taken to be the passive element, is familiar elsewhere in Cicero, e.g. *Fin.* I 18.

³¹ D. Sedley, ‘Epicurus and the Mathematicians of Cyzicus’, *Cronache Ercolanesi* 6 (1976), 23–54, at 45–6.

³² As the origin of *materia* I exclude ὑποκείμενον, tentatively suggested by Dörrie 1987, 472, since at lines 34–8 this ‘matter’ is *additionally* ‘subiectam... omnibus’,

materia can sometimes represent ὕλη,³³ in his almost contemporaneous *Timaeus* translation he uses it consistently (21, 22, 27) to render Plato's οὐσία, a term for which neither of the eventual Latin neologisms *substantia* and *essentia* was yet in circulation.³⁴ That Varro's *materia* may in fact stand for οὐσία is an important possibility to bear in mind, and I shall return to it later.

The next task is to reconstruct, in outline, the dualist physical thesis which the terminology for active and passive principles seeks to articulate. The passive principle is devoid of quality and totally pliable (lines 34-48). The active principle is, or at least contains (5-6), a force which shapes the passive one. Neither principle is ever found apart from the other (8-9). Any combination of them yields 'a body and, so to speak, a sort of quality' (13-15).

With this last phrase we run into an exegetical problem. Can the text really mean that any combination of the two principles is not only a 'body' but also a 'quality' — that it can indifferently be called either? If so, it seems from lines 16-17 that *every* body is a quality, including not just the traditional elements listed at lines 20-2, but even the complex objects exemplified by animals and plants at lines 22-4. A more palatable alternative will be to read 'That which consisted of both was already, in their parlance, a body and, so to speak, a sort of quality' (13-15) as describing two *distinct* products of the principles' combination. Viewed in their own right, the passive and the active principle are, respectively, prime matter and a creative force; but when they are viewed in any actual combination the passive principle becomes some specific primitive body — whether earth, fire, air or water — and the active principle becomes some specific quality of that body, say heat or wetness.³⁵

To pursue this reading further, the same nomenclature of 'body' and 'quality' will then be repeated at the next level up (22-4): out of various combinations produced when one or both of the passive

which must represent πᾶσιν ὑποκειμένην.

³³ Probable examples include *ND* II 81 and fr. 1 (Lactantius, *Inst.* VIII 10).

³⁴ Seneca *Ep.* 58.6 does attribute *essentia* to Cicero, but it occurs nowhere in Cicero's surviving works, and the claim is contradicted by Quintilian's different attributions of the term's origin (II 14.2, III 6.23, VIII 3.33).

³⁵ The impression is given that each of the four elemental stuffs has just one defining quality. This is also a Stoic thesis: D.L. VII 137. On its possible Academic links, via Philistion, see Sandbach 1985, 38.

stuffs, namely water and earth, are affected by one or both of the active stuffs, namely air and fire (26-9), there arise complex bodies and *their* qualities, for example both the body and the form of a frog, of an apple-tree, or of a stone.

This reading — like any, I suspect — requires a small measure of charity. The secondary qualities are represented by the species forms belonging to animals and plants, not by the individual animals and plants themselves (19-20, 22-4); yet it may appear that the primary qualities are exemplified by actual stuffs like air and fire (16-18, 20-2), not, as we would expect, by the properties belonging to those stuffs. Actually, though, this latter impression is on closer inspection no more than a result of the text's condensation. Primary qualities are called *principes* (17, 18), but when the four elemental stuffs are described as the first products of the two principles' interaction they are instead labelled *prima* (22). In the light of what we learn later (51-3),³⁶ it is clear that these 'first' things are in fact the first *qualia* — that is, the first quality-bearing things, and not the qualities themselves. This reading not only makes overall sense of the text, but will also be amply confirmed when we set out, as we must now do, to trace the theory's line of descent from the *Timaeus*.

There can be no doubt that the emphasis on *qualia* and 'qualities' is a formalisation of the argument at *Tim.* 49d-e.³⁷ According to *Timaeus*, at least on the most favoured reading of this text, the water, air, earth and fire into which the receptacle is initially formed are too unstable to be properly designated by a demonstrative like 'this' (τοῦτο, τόδε), and should rather be called 'such' (τοιοῦτο), in recognition of the fact that they are merely transient characterisations of the receptacle. This insistence on *Timaeus*' part is, it seems, translated by our Academics into the labelling of these four stuffs, out of which the world as a whole is then structured (52-7), as *qualia* (= ποιά). Thus far, a mere formalisation of the *Timaeus*. What really does go beyond the letter of the *Timaeus* is the explicit move of distinguishing, within a *quale*, that active component which is its *qualitas* (a term which, as Varro emphasises at some length — *Ac.* I 24-6, omitted from the above text — needs to be coined in order to translate

³⁶ That at 51-3 the first *qualia* generated out of the two principles are the four elemental stuffs is confirmed by the closely parallel summary of the *Timaeus* at D.L. III 70: τράπεσθαι δὲ τὴν οὐσίαν ταύτην [*sc.* matter] εἰς τὰ τέτταρα στοιχεῖα, πῦρ, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα, γῆν· ἐξ ὧν αὐτόν τε τὸν κόσμον καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ γεννᾶσθαι.

³⁷ Cf. Reid 1885, 126.

ποιότης). The term ποιότης itself was, as they well knew, one originally invented by Plato at *Thl.* 189a, and it may be the resultant sense of ownership, rather than any detailed exploitation of ideas from the *Theaetetus*, that underlies their emphasis on the term in this context.

Thus far we have dealt only with the primary qualities which characterise the four basic stuffs (lines 16-22). The four stuffs themselves, out of which complex secondary *qualia* are formed, are divided into two active ones, air and fire, and two passive ones, water and earth (26-9). In this we can certainly glimpse a familiar Stoic doctrine, according to which those same two passive stuffs constitute the material substrate on which the active elements air and fire act to produce complex beings. Once more we must ask whether we are witnessing a Stoic retrojection. There is certainly no need to think so. There is good reason to believe that this Stoic scheme grew out of work in the Academy, in that Xenocrates is reported to have operated with a similar distinction. According to Xenocrates (fr. 213 Isnardi = Aetius I 7.30), earth, water and air are all material elements, and the force which imbues and shapes them is the remaining member of the quartet, fire. Aetius, who records this doctrine, even goes so far as to call it Xenocrates' legacy to the Stoics, no doubt alluding to the many versions of Stoic physics in which the primacy of fire is emphasised. However, the Stoics did normally recognise air as a second active element, and indeed it was usually the combination of air and fire, known as *pneuma*, that was presented as the active shaping power.³⁸ Whether that shift had first occurred within Academic physics or was a Stoic innovation is a matter for guesswork. Perhaps what we are meeting in our old Academic text *is* a Stoic retrojection. But since it amounts to no more than a refinement on Xenocrates' physics, it is at least as likely that it originated in the Academy.³⁹ It cannot in itself prove the case against Antiochus.

One very important correspondence between Platonist and Stoic physics lies in both schools' adoption of a two-level theory. The interaction of the active and passive principles is a purely theoretical

³⁸ R. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, London 1987, 85-9 shows that for the Stoics air or fire, even taken singly, can count as *pneuma*.

³⁹ Simplicius in *Cael.* 700.3-8 (= Theophrastus fr. 171 FHS&G) attributes the same thesis not only to Posidonius but also to Aristotle and Theophrastus. However, this is probably, at best, an overinterpretation of Aristotle, cf. R.W. Sharples, *Theophrastus of Eresus, Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence: Commentary, vol. 3.1, Sources on Physics*, Leiden 1998, 120-1.

construct, not open to any kind of empirical study, and Timaeus emphasises that anyone setting out to study physics must in fact concentrate their attention on the next level up, at which the four basic stuffs interact (57d).⁴⁰ This advice is fully taken to heart by Stoic physics, and before that, it seems, by our Academics. What is less clear from Varro's account, on the other hand, is whether the old Academic theory had anticipated the specific thesis of Stoic physics, mentioned above, which actually identified a 'quality'⁴¹ with that combination of air and fire (called *pneuma* by the Stoics) which is present in the qualified object. But since, as we have seen, the Academics already assign to fire and air at the secondary level an active role closely analogous to that played by the active principle itself when it constitutes 'qualities' at the primary level, it is only to be expected that, as in the Stoic theory, the fire and air should themselves — whether jointly or at any rate severally — constitute those secondary qualities. If so, a very large part of Stoic physics is already built into the Academic theory.

The biggest question of all, to which we must now turn, is why and how a two-principle theory was extracted from the *Timaeus*. Although it was easy enough for later writers, with the benefit of hindsight, to locate in Plato the antecedent of the Stoic theory,⁴² we have seen in Theophrastus independent confirmation of Antiochus' claim that the theory was in fact already current, as a reading of Plato, even before the emergence of Stoicism. Yet, it is often observed, the *Timaeus* clearly offers three principles: not only god and the receptacle, but also that eternal paradigm, the Forms.⁴³ All three of these are

⁴⁰ Contrast Aristotle, who analyses changes even at the most primitive physical level in terms of the perceptible properties hot, cold, wet and dry.

⁴¹ It is these pneumatic *secondary* qualities that receive most emphasis in the Stoic sources, although it seems clear that at the primary level too there are 'qualities' present in prime matter: see e.g. Plu. *Comm. not.* 1085E.

⁴² Notably Aristocles (*SVF* I 98), ...[the Stoics make] ἀρχὰς ὕλην καὶ θεόν, ὡς Πλάτων. Cf. D.L. III 69, ... δύο δε πάντων ἀπέφηνεν [*sc.* Πλάτων] ἀρχὰς, θεὸν καὶ ὕλην, ὃν καὶ νοὺν προσαγορεύει καὶ αἴτιον, and Cic. *Ac.* II 118 (note 7 and p. 51 above), although there is no reason to think that either of these involves a conscious comparison with the Stoics. For a full list of ancient attributions to Plato of a two-principle theory, see M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike* 4, Stuttgart 1996, 152ff. and commentary.

⁴³ E.g. Alexander (*Simpl. in Ph.* 26.13-15); on the pre-history of the schema, cf. Sharples 1995, 73ff.

primitives, present all along in its creation story as items causally relevant to the world's existence and nature, and not themselves generated from prior principles. All three should therefore, according to the standard ancient doxographical practice, be listed as principles of the physical world. Why, before the emergence of Stoicism, should anyone have been motivated to impose on Plato's text the drastic economy which reduces these three to two?

It is actually rather easy to answer this question. True, the *Timaeus* was, virtually from the time of its publication, a uniquely influential text, being the only one that could pretend to be a comprehensive handbook to Plato's 'system'. But Platonists also had to take account of the unwritten doctrines, and above all of Plato's much publicised pair of principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad (or the 'great-and-small'). If these two canonical sources of doctrine — the written and the oral — were to be successfully synthesised, there may have seemed little choice but to reduce the three Timaeian principles to two. That task was already being undertaken by Xenocrates, whose twin principles are said to have been the One and the 'everflowing' (ἀεναέξ, Aetius I 3.23 = fr. 101 Isnardi). The 'everflowing' clearly has some correspondence to — it at the very least, includes — the Timaeian receptacle, and since the One is said to have been equated with νοῦς (fr. 214 Isnardi) it presumably corresponds in some way to the creator god of the *Timaeus*. In fact, Xenocrates is also reported as calling his two principles 'father' and 'mother' (fr. 213 Isnardi = Aetius I 7.30), and these are both metaphors used in the *Timaeus* of, respectively, the creator god and the receptacle (e.g. 37c, 41a, 50d). On his account, everything else is somehow derivative from these two principles, and that includes not only numbers but also souls and Forms, since both of the latter are themselves numbers (fr. 103-12, 176-87 Isnardi). Hence Forms, while fully real, are not among the first principles. Although many details of Xenocrates' theory remain enigmatic,⁴⁴ we can already see that the job of getting the Timaeian trio of principles down to a pair was one which Polemo's immediate

⁴⁴ It is important to bear in mind the inadequacy of our evidence for Xenocrates and other early Academics. However, it seems reasonable to assume, as I have done here, that we may at least place some trust in the later reports of the nomenclature they employed. And because they were not subject to the same intense interpretative scrutiny as Plato and Aristotle themselves, there was a better chance of their own original formulations surviving without gross exegetical contamination.

predecessor acknowledged, and that the reduction of the Forms to the status of derivative, rather than primary, principles was at any rate one established way of proceeding.⁴⁵

Against this background, the two-principle theory described by Theophrastus and Antiochus should not surprise us. However, the indefinite principle is now more clearly restricted to physical matter — the Timaeon receptacle — and hardly seems something from which numbers and their further derivatives could be held to arise. There is, in any case, no vestige in the Cicero text of Xenocrates' arithmetical approach to metaphysics, the generation of Forms included. Yet Forms there must be, because Varro clearly implies that the theory of Forms, while abandoned by Aristotle, was maintained by all Platonists down to the generation of Polemo (*Ac.* I 33-4).⁴⁶ The obvious guess, although no more than a guess, will be that the Polemonian Academics already held a version of the thesis, common in the subsequent history of Platonism, that the Forms are god's

⁴⁵ Accepting with others that Iamblichus, *De communi mathematica scientia* IV 14.18-18.23 (which I take to be about the first principles of the five mathematical sciences considered in *Rep.* VII) is authentic testimony for Speusippus, I suggest the following sketch of Platonist metaphysics in the half-century after Plato's death. A key task was to fit the unwritten One-plus-Dyad ontology to the ontology of the dialogues. A crucial datum for the latter was that the One is at *Rep.* VII 524e6 made a first principle, not of everything, but specifically of *arithmetic*; hence somehow it was numbers that had to come out as the first products in the ladder of being. (1) Speusippus dealt with this by making numbers the sole products of the One and the Dyad/Receptacle, while the subject matters of other sciences, such as geometrical figures, although posterior to numbers in the sense of presupposing them, are not derivative from them, but are independently produced by further pairs of principles merely *analogous* to the One-plus-Dyad/Receptacle. The One and Dyad are the supreme principles only in this rather attenuated sense. (2) Xenocrates, who evidently did not like the 'episodic' nature of this any more than Aristotle did (*Met.* 1076a1), solved the problem as follows. The One and the Dyad/Receptacle are indeed the primary principles, generating numbers, but thereafter everything else is actually derived from numbers — Forms are numbers, soul is a self-moving number, and everything else is presumably somehow the product of these two plus the receptacle. (3) Polemo seems to offer an alternative scheme to Xenocrates', where the One (= god) and the Dyad (= matter) are still the principles from which everything else is derived, but via the material world, by-passing the primacy of numbers. If so, he must somehow have found a way to ignore or explain away the special relation of the One to arithmetic implied in *Rep.* VII. The trick was perhaps to de-emphasise *Rep.* altogether, and to concentrate on *Ti.*

⁴⁶ For the correct reading of this passage, cf. P.L. Donini, 'Testi e commenti, manuali e insegnamento: la forma sistematica e i metodi della filosofia in età postellenistica', *ANRW* II 36.7 (1994), 5027-5100, at 5028-9 n. 3, 5038-9, n. 31.

thoughts, and hence not themselves primary principles but ones derivative from the active member of the pair of primary principles.⁴⁷

But a further reduction is still needed. The old Academic active principle is an emphatically immanent ‘power’ (*vis*, presumably = δύναμις, the term used by Theophrastus) which, viewed as the intelligent nature governing the whole world (lines 59-60), is both the ‘world-soul’ (63) and ‘god’ (65-6). By contrast, the ‘god’ who is a primary cause in the *Timaeus* is the non-immanent demiurge; and, although the world-soul is a god too (47c), it is a secondary, created god, not a primary principle. We must take it, then, that one aspect of the slimming operation, which has enabled these Academics to beat Plato down to just two primary principles, is to conflate the two gods in question into a single being.⁴⁸ The world-soul is not a further divine being created by the primary god, but *is* that primary god, himself functioning as the world’s immanent nature. Thus a simple conflation within the Platonic pantheon has delivered a world-immanent deity already barely distinguishable from the Stoic god, especially when we bear in mind that the Platonic world-soul, just like the Stoic god, is co-extensive with the entire cosmos (*Ti.* 34a-b).

But exactly how is this ‘god’ related to the active principle? Just as in Theophrastus’ report the active principle is one which Plato merely ‘connects with the power of god and with that of the good’, so too in the Academic text the relation of the active principle to god is less than fully specified. Now, we can at least say that the active principle itself either is a ‘power’ or at least possesses one (lines 6, 10-11, cf. 49). Significantly, god too is a ‘power’ (line 63), further equated with a sentient and perfectly rational nature (lines 59-60), with the world-soul (line 63),⁴⁹ with an intellect (*mens*, 64), with perfect wisdom (65), and with providence (67).⁵⁰ And given that god,

⁴⁷ The attribution of this thesis to Antiochus himself has frequently been argued (bibliography in Görler 1994, 951-2), and some (e.g. Dillon 1977, 29, P.L. Donini, *Le scuole, l'anima, l'impero: la filosofia antica da Antioco a Plotino*, Turin 1982, 76, Giusta 1986, 183, Mansfeld 1989, 156 n. 38) maintain that its origin lay in the early Academy. Mansfeld 1992, 268 suggests, in Theophrastus’ case, that the dualist reading of Plato arose in a somewhat different way, from identifying the Timaeian demiurge with the Good of the *Republic*.

⁴⁸ Thus Dillon 1977, 83. Comparably reductive treatments of the Timaeian demiurge have been not uncommon in the subsequent interpretative tradition: see e.g. Cornford 1937, 34-9.

⁴⁹ *animus ... mundi*: that *animus* here represents ψυχή is shown by Reid 1885 *ad loc.*

⁵⁰ For this translation of *prudentia*, see note 53 below.

in his guise as nature and world-soul, is immanent in matter, he clearly cannot be anything *over and above* the active principle. Rather, we must suppose that when the active principle is viewed in relation to individual *qualia* it is present as their qualities (cf. 48-53), but that when that same active principle is viewed in relation to the unified whole of which those individual *qualia* are parts (53-9) it is rational nature, world-soul, god and all the rest.

These attributes of the active principle when viewed as god are well supported by the *Timaeus*. The absolute centrality of the world-soul to the Timaeian cosmology needs no demonstration. The demiurge and the world-soul are both 'god' (30a, 30d, 47c etc.), and both of them either are or at least have 'intellect' (νοῦς: 30b, 39e, 47e-48a), and 'intelligent nature' (ἐμφρων φύσις: 46d).⁵¹ The demiurge is further characterised by 'providence' (πρόνοια, 30b-c). These associations and equivalences are Stoic too.⁵² The world-soul gets far less emphasis from the Stoics than in the *Timaeus*, however, even though the specific thesis that god is the world-soul is attributed to them (Philo *Aet.* 84), and in particular Cleanthes (Aetius I 7.17), while Zeno himself at Cic. *ND* II 58 is at least said to speak of the 'world's intellect' ('*mens mundi*'), which, like our Academics, he further equates with both an intelligent world-nature and 'providence'.⁵³ Our text's talk of the world-soul is, then, more directly reminiscent of the *Timaeus* than of Stoicism. Likewise in making perfect reason a property of the deity (60), without actually identifying the two, it falls short of the Stoic divine λόγος, while reflecting the usage of the *Timaeus* (37b-c, 38c). But in general its range of equated concepts constitutes entirely common ground between Plato and Stoicism. Once again, there is no necessity to see them as Stoic imports,

⁵¹ Is this nature also 'sentient', as at line 59 of the Cicero text? Presumably yes (thus also Cornford 1937, 96), especially as the world-soul reasons about τὸ αἰσθητόν (37b) — a point also emphasised by Crantor, fr. 10(2) Mette 1984.

⁵² See e.g. *SVF* I 176.

⁵³ Since in this passage πρόνοια is, a little surprisingly, translated not only as *providentia* but also as *prudentia*, the latter may well (cf. Reid 1885, 134) represent the same Greek word in our text at line 67. Cicero more than once invokes the derivation of *prudentia* from *providere* (*Leg.* I 60, *quae virtus ex providendo est appellata prudentia*; Nonius, 42.3, *prudentiam a providendo dictam dilucide ostendit M. Tullius in Hortensio, id enim est sapientis, providere; ex quo sapientia est appellata prudentia, ...et De republica lib. VI: totam igitur expectas prudentiam huius rectoris, quae ipsum nomen hoc nacta est ex providendo*. Most telling, however, is *De senectute* 78, cited in the ellipsis of the same passage from Nonius, *cum tanta celeritas animorum sit, tanta memoria praeteritorum futurorumque prudentia*, where the same sense as is implied by the etymology remains alive in the word's use.

because all belong firmly within the tradition inaugurated by the *Timaeus*.

One point where a serious case for a Stoic retrojection *can* be made is the fuller description of providence at lines 68-70. Its first concern is to govern the workings of the heavens, 'but secondarily, on the earth, those things which relate to mankind'. Now the first half of this description goes to the very heart of the Timaeian cosmology, where the world-soul is constructed above all with a view to the ordering of the celestial orbits. There is no comparable emphasis to be found in Stoicism. But the other half, according to which the secondary focus of the world-soul's providential activity is anthropocentric, has been thought unhistorical on the grounds that it represents Stoic rather than Platonic teleology.⁵⁴ And certainly our sources do make it a distinctively Stoic thesis that the world was created, and is governed, for the sake of man. But there is no difficulty in reconstructing how the Polemonian Academy might have extracted the thesis of secondary anthropocentrism from the *Timaeus*. While the world-soul is constructed primarily in order to govern the celestial rotations, the demiurge's main reason for then *illuminating* the solar orbit was 'to make the heaven fully evident to all, and so that those creatures to which it was appropriate [i.e. humans] should share in number, learning it from the revolution of the same and the similar' (39b-c). Correspondingly, the human body has been given eyes primarily so that we may benefit from the study of the celestial orbits (47a-c). All this, added to the explicit indication (37a-b, see below) that the world-soul devotes some of its thoughts to the realm of becoming, is more than sufficient to identify divine 'providence' as partially anthropocentric,⁵⁵ and indeed it would be an unusual notion of divine πρόνοια that did *not* give some degree of prominence to human benefit. If this is right, the partly anthropocentric doctrine attributed to the old Academy is no retrojection of Stoicism, but a genuinely intermediate stage between the Platonic and Stoic notions of divine providence.

There are two further characterisations of god — as 'necessity' and 'chance' (lines 70-8) — still to take into account, but I shall save

⁵⁴ Lévy 1992, 554.

⁵⁵ I leave aside the more obviously providentialist account of the construction of the human soul and body (69a-90d), since the primary beneficiaries of this are not human beings as such, but the immortal souls which will ultimately be liberated from incarnation.

these until near the end. Before that, we must turn to the passive principle.

That the Academic passive principle resembles the ‘receptacle’ of the *Timaeus* more closely than Stoic ‘matter’ does is undeniable. For example, the need for the active principle always to be in some matter is explained in lines 12-13 by the words ‘since there is nothing which is not compelled to be somewhere’. As Reid well observes in his *Academica* commentary, this reflects Plato’s argument for the necessity of a receptacle at *Tim.* 52b: ‘We say that whatever is must necessarily be in some place’ (φάμεν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πού τὸ ὄν ἅπαν ἔν τινι τόπῳ).⁵⁶ By adverting to this argument, the doctrine is capturing one of the unique and most widely discussed features of the Platonic receptacle, its conflation of certain roles typical of matter with others more germane to space.⁵⁷ Stoic physics, by contrast, has a fully articulated concept of space, in its twin guises as occupied intra-cosmic ‘place’ and unoccupied extra-cosmic ‘void’, and matter seems as a consequence to be relieved of all such localising functions. The Academic doctrine, as reported, once again seems to stand somewhere between the *Timaeus* and Stoicism.

The status of space is worth pursuing a little further. The old Academic doctrine describes the world as single, with no matter or body outside it (lines 55-7). This singleness is of course explicitly argued in the *Timaeus* (31a-b), and the absence of anything at all external to our world is built into Timaeus’ defence of its perfect sphericity (33c-d): there is nothing outside in relation to which it could need organs of perception, breathing, eating, self-defence or locomotion. Arguably — especially if one bears in mind the contrast with Aristotle, who altogether rejects the notion of self-subsistent

⁵⁶ Görler 1990, 128-9 rightly points out that in its original context this describes a twilight kind of being, contrasted with the real being of the Forms, and that likewise the *interfusion* of the active and passive principle (lines 8-9: ‘in utroque tamen utrumque’) emphasises another characteristic which for Plato distinguishes this shadowy being from real being, the latter’s separation being conveyed by the precisely opposite description, οὐδέτερον ἐν οὐδέτερόν (52c). However, I would not follow Görler in interpreting this as a case of Antiochus “quoting Plato to confute Plato”. These Academics are still committed to some version of the theory of Forms (above p. 62), and to the existence of two kinds of οὐσία (see below pp. 70-2), so they may well, without compromising their physics, accept that the οὐσία of the Forms (presumably accessed by sharing god’s thoughts, as described at *Ti.* 90a-d) is superior to that of enmattered things.

⁵⁷ See K. Algra, *Concepts of Space in Greek Thought*, Leiden 1995, chapter 3.

space — some notion of extra-cosmic space is assumed by Plato here, especially as Timaeus later allows the theoretical possibility that there might after all be a limited number of other worlds out there (55d). Our text's formalisation of all this into the doctrine *extra quem nulla pars materiae sit nullumque corpus* (56-7) still falls well short of the fully articulated Stoic doctrine of extra-cosmic void. But it is plausible that the Stoics' sophisticated elucidation of the notion of space arose from the perceived need to make explicit what they considered already implicit in the Academic formulation,⁵⁸ and to go beyond it in supplying a unified theory covering both intra-cosmic and extra-cosmic space.

The next aspect to tackle is Varro's remarkable emphasis on the infinite divisibility of matter (lines 39-53). Not only can matter be infinitely fragmented (43-6), but also, because the intervals over which movement takes place are also infinitely divisible, the active principle itself moves over infinitely divisible intervals, thus travelling ubiquitously⁵⁹ and achieving total penetration of matter (46-52). On this basis, the infinite-divisibility thesis is invoked as underscoring matter's complete malleability (cf. 39-41), and the active principle's total dominance over it.

Although the infinite divisibility of matter and extension became a Stoic thesis too, it is not nearly so forcefully underlined in our sources on Stoic physics, a difference which suggests that an explanation of it within its Platonic context is required. I think this explanation is forthcoming, but I shall work my way to it indirectly, starting from Xenocrates.

Two of the contributions for which Xenocrates achieved widespread publicity are: (a) his deliteralisation of Plato's creation story in the *Timaeus*, whereby he argued that the world is eternal and that Plato had described its creation merely as an expository device (frr.

⁵⁸ Cf. Sedley 1998, 78-82, where I argue that this cosmology, rather than its Stoic successor, is the direct target of the Epicurean critique found at Lucr. I 1052-1113.

⁵⁹ 50-1, *sic ultro citroque versetur*, was suggested by some participants in the Symposium Hellenisticum to allude to the two-way movement described in the Stoic doctrine of pneumatic tension (e.g. SVF II 450-1). I cannot find any close enough textual or conceptual parallels to support this idea, however. In context, in any case, the emphasis is mainly on *sic* because the active principle moves to and fro *in the aforementioned way* (i.e. over infinitely divisible intervals), it can get everywhere. One might locate possible Timaeian antecedents for the locution (e.g. 58b8), but it will I think become clear that its main motivation is one internal to the debate with Xenocrates.

153-8 Isnardi); (b) his doctrine of 'indivisible lines' (fr. 123-51 Isnardi). I doubt if the combination of these two theses is accidental. The *Timaeus*, read literally, propounds the notorious asymmetric thesis that the world had a beginning but will have no end. However, it mitigates the asymmetry by observing that the world *is* perishable, but will in fact never perish since only god is capable of destroying it, and he, being good, would not want to do so (32c, 38b, 41a-b, 43d, cf. 40b). Xenocrates' deliteralisation, I assume, will have included a re-reading of this latter thesis as likewise merely expository, the world in fact being not contingently everlasting but essentially both beginningless *and* endless.

Now in the Timaean world, destruction at the lowest level of analysis stops with the primary triangles. These are separated and recombined in the intertransformations of air, fire and water, but they themselves, although they apparently have ἀρχαί of their own (53d), are never resolved into them. Hence readers of the *Timaeus* since Aristotle have regularly understood that the primary triangles are indivisible and indissoluble.⁶⁰ But how indissoluble? Since so long as the world lasts body's resolution into these same triangles marks the lower limit of its destruction, it is a natural inference that the triangles are no less indissoluble than the world is. There is therefore every probability that Xenocrates felt impelled to infer, from his thesis of the world's intrinsic indestructibility, that the triangles too are not merely contingently everlasting, thanks to divine protection, but intrinsically indissoluble. And since this indissolubility can hardly derive from the entirely passive and featureless receptacle in which they inhere, it can only belong to the triangles themselves, viewed as mathematical objects. That would be quite enough motivation to set Xenocrates off on his defence of mathematical indivisibles.⁶¹

⁶⁰ E.g. Ar. *GC* 325b26-7, 33, 326a22. These triangles should not be confused with the composite triangles making up the faces of the elementary particles, which *are* dissoluble (e.g. 89c).

⁶¹ Thus with his theory of indivisible lines Xenocrates is uncovering the ἀρχαί which, according to Plato, make the triangles truly primary. Since these ἀρχαί are known only to 'god and, of men, any who is dear to him' (*Ti.* 53d), Xenocrates is making an extravagant claim for himself. I am not sure *how* he derived indivisible scalene triangles from indivisible lines, since the latter should all be of equal size, but our earliest and fullest source, [Ar.] *De lineis insecabilibus*, ch. 1, makes it clear that the Xenocratean theory it is attacking does argue for indivisible planes, including triangles, as well as lines, despite the difficulties this raises (cf. *ib.* 970a8-11).

Now contrast the next generation of Academics, as we meet them in Varro's summary. First, they have abandoned Xenocrates' revision of the Timaeon cosmogony and returned to a literal reading: the world has been brought about out of the two principles (lines 55-6), and, although the divine nature which holds it together will last forever, this fact is contingent, there being nothing stronger than god to prevent him from perpetuating the world order (61-2).⁶² Second, these same Academics appear to have reacted, with remarkable forcefulness, against Xenocrates' doctrine of indivisibles (lines 39-53). The passive principle is infinitely divisible, they insist, there being no smallest magnitude and no smallest distance. Consequently matter is totally pliable, and can be altered in any way at all, without restriction, by the active power in it.

That these two revisions to Xenocrates' theories are interdependent, just as I have suggested those theories themselves had been, seems very probable. If so, we might wonder which of the two revisionary theses is driving the other. I cannot see how to set about answering such a question. What can be said, however, is that the initially surprising length at which infinite divisibility is maintained is much more readily explicable in the context of this Academic debate than as a retrojection of Stoicism.

Incidentally, the strong insistence on matter's unlimited pliability, combined with the lack of any mention of the primary triangles or the regular solids derived from them out of which the *Timaeus* account constructs the four elemental stuffs, may give the impression

⁶² Cf. the even clearer formulation of this asymmetry at *Ac.* II 118: *Plato ex materia in se omnia recipiente mundum factum esse censet a deo sempiternum*. The fact that this asymmetric thesis found particular favour in the late 4th-century BC Academy helps provide (via Epicurus) a target for *Lucr.* V 156-234, where precisely the same thesis is criticised. (See further Sedley 1998, 75-8; C. Lévy, 'Lucrèce et les Stoïciens', in R. Poignault (ed.), *Présence de Lucrèce*, Tours, 1999, 87-98, at 87-91, replies that Lucretius could be referring to such Stoics as Panaetius and Boethus, who he argues were asymmetrists, but *Stob. Ecl.* 171.5-7 on Panaetius' favouring τὴν αἰδιότητα τοῦ κόσμου and *Cic. Tusc.* I 79 confirm what already seems to me the natural reading of *Philo, Aet.* 78, namely that Panaetius and Boethus denied the world's generation as well as its destruction; the ensuing concentration on their arguments against its destruction is probably explained by their assumption that any generation of the world would be regeneration, παλιγγενεσία, following a prior destruction.) However, I do not wish to imply that the asymmetric thesis had ever been without adherents in the Academy: the fact that Aristotle attributes the alternative, non-genetic account of the Timaeon cosmogony to 'some people' (*De caelo* 279b32) hardly suggests that in his day it was the unanimous view of the Academy.

that the mathematical aspects of the *Timaeus* have been de-emphasised by these Academics. However, this impression would probably be too hasty. Varro's introductory remarks (*Ac.* I 6) suggest a different explanation. He there insists that his school's physics, in describing how the active principle⁶³ imposes form on matter, has to use geometry, and it is hard to see what he can have in mind here if not the Platonic construction of the primary stuffs out of combinations of triangles. In the same breath Cicero makes Varro tell us the likely reason for his subsequent omission of this geometry from the formal summary of Old Academic physics: given the current state of Latin technical vocabulary, the geometrical material is simply too difficult to translate ('...adhibenda est geometria, quam quibusnam quisquam enuntiare verbis aut quem ad intelligendum poterit adducere?'). We must assume, then, that the full summary of old Academic physics from which Cicero is working did include the geometry of the primary particles. What is certain, however, given what we have just seen, is that neither these particles nor the triangles composing them were presented as indivisible.

In the light of the emphasis on infinite divisibility, it is now possible to speculate a little further about the nomenclature of the passive element. We saw earlier that, somewhat surprisingly, when Cicero speaks of it as 'a kind of matter' ('*materia quaedam*') this could very well be translating οὐσία τις rather than ὅλη τις. Indeed, one of the unexplained mysteries of Hellenistic philosophy is the way that οὐσία acquired and retained the dominant sense of 'matter' (like 'substance', in the sense which this word still bears in ordinary English usage).⁶⁴ It may be that we are now in a position to help clear up the mystery. According to the *Timaeus* (35a, 37a-b), there are two kinds of οὐσία of which the world-soul is constituted, and about which it thinks. Bodies, or γιγνόμενα, possess an οὐσία which is μεριστή and σκεδαστή, a 'divisible' and 'scattered' kind of being, while unchanging things possess οὐσία ἀμέριστος, an 'indivisible (or undivided)' kind of being (37a-b). What exactly is meant by this

⁶³ Varro here uses the unusual term *effectio* for the active principle. The reason is no doubt that his later designation of it as *qualitas* requires an extensive excursus on the Latinisation of technical terminology (24-6), which he does not wish to anticipate in his prefatory remarks.

⁶⁴ The puzzle is well articulated by Hahn 1977, 40. The fact that, as we saw above (p. 57), Cicero translates οὐσία as *materia* even at *Ti.* 37a, where it is hardly 'matter' that is meant, is evidence of how pervasive this sense had become by his day.

contrast between ‘scattered *ousia*’ and ‘indivisible *ousia*’ was a celebrated exegetical problem, which we know from Plutarch’s *On the generation of soul in the Timaeus* to have been intensely discussed in the late fourth-century Academy. It is not hard to guess how our Academics are reading it, especially as Plutarch attests the reading in question to have been the one advocated by Polemo’s close colleague Crantor in his *Timaeus* commentary (in opposition to the very different interpretation previously advanced by Xenocrates). The divisible *ousia* is, on this view, simply matter.⁶⁵ Physical objects contrast with pure thought-objects in having matter, and, the Polemonian Academics will have noted, Plato’s contrast between the two kinds of *ousia* emphasises above all that matter’s *divisibility* and *dispersability*⁶⁶ — the very characteristics which they themselves emphasise in lines 40-51. Thus matter is, on their reading of Plato, an inherently divisible, and thus pliable, *ousia*.

Now it is true that in the same context Plato speaks of a second kind of *ousia*, an indivisible one, which is on Crantor’s interpretation straightforwardly equatable with intelligible being, i.e. the Forms. But, as we have seen, according to the Academic physics which we are examining the Forms are not to be found among the primary principles. Thus, at least when they are speaking about those primary principles, it is matter alone that would stand out as ‘one kind of *ousia*’.⁶⁷ And that is exactly the usage we see reflected in Varro’s account, if we allow ourselves the assumption that his *materia quaedam* translates οὐσία τις.

Although doxographies frequently list the Stoic twin principles as ὕλη and θεός, our evidence shows that one regular early Stoic term for the former was in fact ἄποιος οὐσία — that is, the kind of *ousia* which lacks all qualities.⁶⁸ This expression is one which perfectly fits the context of the Academic physics we are examining. For there, as we have seen, any portion of the passive principle in itself lacks intrinsic qualities, although it contains a corresponding portion of the active principle which constitutes its quality or qualities. Given

⁶⁵ Crantor fr. 10 Mette 1984.

⁶⁶ Cf. Plu. *Def. or.* 430F, where τὸ σκεδαστὸν καὶ μεριστὸν is a characteristic of matter.

⁶⁷ Cf. D.L. III 70 (quoted in n. 36 above), where the summary of Platonic physics refers to matter as τὴν οὐσίαν ταύτην.

⁶⁸ See especially SVF I 86-8, II 316-17. For discussion of the relation between the terms ὕλη and οὐσία, see Hahn 1977, 29-30, Reydam-Schils 1997, 460-1.

the enormous Academic emphasis on the terminology of ‘qualities’, ἄποιος would be the obvious adjective for them to use in describing this particular kind of *ousia*.

Here then we seem to have a plausible story about how οὐσία, a key term from the *Timaeus*, acquired the material connotations which then stuck to it for the remainder of the Hellenistic age. Originally the Academy bequeathed to the Stoa the notion of matter as an unqualified kind of *ousia* (ἄποιος οὐσία), technically contrasted with another, intelligible kind of *ousia*, but because this latter kind had largely fallen out of the picture the simple noun *ousia* itself acquired the material connotations which were thereafter to become inseparable from it.

If my general reconstruction in this paper is right, Aristotle may not be the major influence on Stoic physics that he is sometimes taken to be.⁶⁹ But at least the Stoic use of ὕλη, if I am right, is probably *not* a legacy of the old Academic theory as it has come down to us. Is this, then, one genuine vestige of Aristotelianism? I think that it may be. But whether it derives from Aristotle himself is less clear. A doctrine of prime matter is notoriously difficult to locate anywhere in Aristotle’s surviving writings, even if we suppose, controversially, that these were much read by the Stoics. On the other hand, Theophrastus’ doxographical writings were undoubtedly influential in the Hellenistic age,⁷⁰ and some have even argued that his presentation of Heraclitus may have influenced the Stoic conflagration theory.⁷¹ As we saw in the opening part of this paper, Theophrastus used the Aristotelian term ὕλη in placing Platonic physics — interpreted

⁶⁹ In a rare concession, Krämer 1971, 122 allows that the strictly passive Stoic matter is closer to its Aristotelian than its ‘Academic’ counterpart; but this is because he takes Xenocrates as his representative of the latter, overlooking the evidence for the Polemonian Academy.

⁷⁰ In Sedley 1998, ch. 6 I argue that Theophrastus’ *Physical opinions* was closely read by Epicurus at the end of the fourth century, and that it probably also influenced Stoic arguments about the destructibility of the world — one of the doctrines, incidentally, in which Stoic physics did depart from the Academic physics under discussion here.

⁷¹ Theophrastus fr. 225 FHS&G. See e.g. J. Kerschensteiner, ‘Der Bericht des Theophrast über Heraklit’, *Hermes* 83 (1955), 385–411, for the widely accepted view that Theophrastus (i) interpreted Heraclitus this way and (ii) influenced the later Stoicising presentation of him. I agree with Long 1975–6 that Cleanthes, and no doubt other Stoics, read Heraclitus for themselves. But it remains quite credible that Theophrastus helped influence *how* they read him.

along more or less the same lines as in the Polemonian Academy⁷² — at the end of a long and honourable tradition of physical dualism. If ὕλη came to compete with ἄποιος οὐσία as the formal Stoic designation of the passive principle, Theophrastus may deserve at least some of the credit.⁷³

Down to this point, Varro's summary of old Academic physics has proved, both in outline and in detail, to fulfil the expectation of a theory which (a) arose from close reflection on the *Timaeus* as an authoritative text, and (b) itself paved the way for Stoic physics. We have encountered no Stoic-looking features which could not have been legitimately derived from Timaeian material. But when we come to the final lines (70-8), it may look as if our luck has finally run out. The benevolent god, who is also nature, the world-soul and providence, turns out to have two further guises. He is sometimes called 'necessity', because he predetermines an everlasting sequence of future events, and also sometimes 'chance' (*fortuna* = *τύχη*), because many of his effects go unpredicted owing to human ignorance of causes. The description reads like pure Stoicism⁷⁴ — the characteristically Stoic thesis of universal 'fate'. And this time it appears to have no legitimate place at all in the Platonic tradition.⁷⁵

We have thus come to a crucial juncture. If even this final item can somehow be shown to be explicable within the Platonic tradition, we have hit the jackpot, since it will provide us with nothing less than a credible origin for Stoic determinism.⁷⁶ But if we fail, those who

⁷² Theophrastus' summary in fr. 230 FHS&G contains too little detail to date the precise version of the theory known to him: I would not want to exclude the possibility that a forerunner of what I have called the 'Polemonian' interpretation was available to him from the Academy before Polemo's actual headship.

⁷³ Cf. Long 1998, 375-9 for discussion of Theophrastus' possible influence on Stoic physics.

⁷⁴ For the Stoic definition of *τύχη* as ἄδηλος αἰτία ἀνθρωπίνῳ λογισμῷ see SVF II 965-73.

⁷⁵ The fact that Xenocrates wrote a work *Περὶ εἰμαρμένης* (D.L. IV 12) is not enough to make him a determinist (its likely theme may, as Emidio Spinelli has suggested to me, be gleaned from SE *M* VII 149). The later Platonic tradition, when it seeks to accommodate the issue of determinism and responsibility, discerns Plato's main contribution as being at *Rep.* X 617d-e, which sketches a merely conditional kind of necessity: when you choose a life, the choice is yours alone, not god's, but you must thereafter necessarily live with the consequences.

⁷⁶ This is not, of course, to deny that debate about the work of Diodorus Cronus played a part in the evolution of Stoic determinism (cf. D. Sedley, 'Diodorus Cronus and Hellenistic Philosophy', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*

believe this text to represent a retrojection of Stoicism will find their case much strengthened, and doubt will be cast on the entire reconstruction that I have proposed.

The difficulty lies not merely in the absence from Plato's work of any such doctrine of fatal necessitation, but also in the very different use of the term 'necessity' emphasised by the *Timaeus* itself. As any reader of the dialogue knows well, 'necessity' is a key term there, but, while in the Academic account that is before us it corresponds to the active principle god, in the *Timaeus* 'necessity' represents on the contrary the contribution made by the passive principle, matter.

Or does it? This reading is so much in our bloodstream that we may forget how incredibly brief and cryptic the *Timaeus* is on the subject of ἀνάγκη. At 47e-48a, Timaeus announces a change of topic, from the works of νοῦς to those of ἀνάγκη, because, he adds, the generation of the world came about out of a mixture of these two. *Nous* governs *ananke*, persuading it towards what is best. Finally, he adds the famous further description of *ananke* as the 'wandering cause' (πλανωμένη αἰτία). And that is all he has to say, before he launches into his account of the creation of the elementary particles in the receptacle, to be followed by an extended account of the basic laws of particle physics.

'Necessity' here is commonly understood as representing the constraints which matter imposes on the workings of the demiurge, and thus sometimes also as Plato's explanation of the presence of evil in the world. But what reaction to this same passage should we expect from the Academics whose acquaintance we have been making? As we have seen, their defence of infinite divisibility is intimately bound up with the contention that matter is totally passive and pliable. An immediate implication of this is that the material principle could not possibly put up any resistance at all to the workings of the benevolent active cause, and thus cannot be the source of imperfections in the world, if indeed there are any.

What then would these same Academics make of the fanfare with which 'necessity' is thrust onto the stage at *Timaeus* 47e-48a? Clearly the term there must in their eyes describe, not something set in polar opposition to the active principle, but one aspect of that principle. The active principle, then, viewed on a cosmic scale, is not only a

203 (1977), 74-120, at 99-101); but it cannot easily account for the cosmic and providentialist aspects of the doctrine.

benevolent intelligence: it is also *the laws of physics* which, when imposed and governed by that intelligence, ensure that its dictates are enforced through the workings of an unbreakable causal nexus.⁷⁷ That is in all probability how, as reported at lines 70-4, they are construing Plato's words on necessity.

As for Plato's further equation of this same necessity with the 'wandering cause', it is succinctly accommodated at lines 74-8, which we may now interpret as follows. Necessity's causal workings are often obscure to us, and when they are they earn the name of 'chance',⁷⁸ because, although they are genuinely causal, they amount to a kind of cause on which we are in no position to place any reliance — a 'wandering' cause, as Plato called it. Thus the uncertainty of the 'wandering cause' is a purely epistemic one.⁷⁹

I am suggesting, then, that the equation of god with necessity in our text is likely to represent a serious attempt by the Polemonian Academics to ensure coherence in their own global interpretation of the *Timaeus*. We already have seen strong evidence that they opposed the Xenocratean view according to which matter is to some extent resistant and intractable. That they should, in line with this, also reinterpret Timaeus' 'necessity' as an aid rather than an obstacle to the workings of divine intelligence makes complete sense — so much so that, had they not done so, their interpretation would face the charge of incoherence.

If we interpret them in this way, we have yet another precious insight into the origins of Stoic cosmology. The Stoic world, like theirs, is entirely unspoiled by the intransigence of matter.⁸⁰ Instead,

⁷⁷ For the laws of physics as *συνάιτια* of god's benevolent works, see especially 46c-d. Note too the final appearance of *ἀνάγκη* in this guise at 68e-69a. That these laws should be described as 'fated' (*fatalem* 72 = *εἰμαρμένους*) may to us have an obviously Stoic ring, but it is entirely in keeping with Timaeus' language too: see 41e, 89b-c.

⁷⁸ This could have been confirmed by 46e, the description of causes which import motion 'of necessity': these, 'when isolated from wisdom, every time bring about chance effects without order (*τὸ τυχρὸν ἄτακτον*)'. Here it may be that 'wisdom' was interpreted as human wisdom.

⁷⁹ This reading could well have been seen as foreshadowed earlier in the text, where Timaeus offered a similarly epistemic analysis of the 'wanderings' (*πλάναι*) of the planetary bodies: they in reality directly reflect the mathematically regular workings of the divine world-soul, and their being called 'wanderers' is accounted for by the fact that their true mathematical nature is unknown to all but a handful of human beings (39c-d).

⁸⁰ The claim of M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa*, Göttingen 1959 (2nd ed.), I 100, II 57 that

it involves the workings of 'necessity' as a strictly positive force, the physical nexus of causes by which the providential deity ensures that his will is fully imposed. It almost certainly remained for the Stoics to develop their full theory of causation, and to perceive and deflect the threat to human autonomy which a universal causal nexus imposed. Neither of these shows any sign of having been anticipated by the Academic theory. What the Polemonian Academics can, however, be credited with is inspiring the idea, later to become so central to Stoicism, that causal necessitation, or 'fate', is in itself a positive aspect of divine benevolence.

At this point I rest my case for the fundamental authenticity of Varro's report.⁸¹ He attributes to the Academy a physics which proves to be significantly closer to the *Timaeus* than Stoicism is, and in ways which seem historically altogether plausible for the post-Xenocratean Academy. If it is a fabrication, it is an astonishingly good one. As for Antiochus' own credentials, I argued earlier that he is by and large an unexpectedly scrupulous historical reporter in *Academica* I, with no interest in exaggerating the proximity of Academic to Stoic physics. And although we cannot be certain that no component of his account has suffered Stoic contamination, I hope at least to have shown that the whole of it can be credibly accounted for without the help of that supposition. At the very least, the onus of proof should now fall on those who wish to insist on his unreliability.

for Stoicism as well as Platonism matter is the cause of evil is inadequately supported: see A.A. Long, 'On Hierocles Stoicus apud Stobaeum', in M.S. Funghi (ed.), *ΟΔΟΙ ΔΙΖΗΣΙΟΣ: Le vie della ricerca (Studi in onore di Francesco Adorno)*, Florence 1996, 299-309, at 303-4 n. 9; R.W. Sharples, 'Plato, Plotinus, and Evil', *BICS* 39 (1994), 171-81, at 172 n. 5.

⁸¹ I am conscious of not having done justice to a further question properly urged upon me by Brad Inwood: might not the *ordering* of the material in this report show Stoic influence? It is not clear how to answer such a question, since if the individual theses are Academic ones which were by and large inherited by the Stoics then the same could be true of their sequence. It is certainly true that the final group of themes, focusing on god and his guises, is reminiscent of Stoicism, and does not directly reflect the order of material in the *Timaeus*; but we simply have no information on what ordering of physical topics had already, before the advent of Stoicism, become conventional in the Academy as a result of Xenocrates' formal systematisation of philosophy. As a matter of fact one feature of Varro's report, his saving god for the end without identifying him as the active principle at the outset, is one which, while matching Theophrastus' pre-Stoic report of Plato, stands in contrast both to Stoic physics and to the later presentations of Plato's two principles (see note 42 above), which may well be influenced by Stoicism.

It is very important to emphasise here that the doctrine which Varro reports has proved to be no bland synthesis of fourth-century Academic physics. Rather, as its anti-Xenocratean thrust makes clear, it is a specific version of Academic physics, belonging to the generation after Xenocrates. Just as Antiochus surely read Polemo's ethics for himself in original Academic texts, there is good reason to expect that, when recording the physics of Polemo's Academy, he should likewise have drawn directly on a first-hand Academic source. If there were Stoic contamination, then, it would more probably be attributable to Antiochus himself than to some intermediary source. But he simply was not interested enough in physics for much such contamination, intentional or unwitting, to be likely.

Some readers may feel uneasy about the bold re-interpretations of the *Timaeus* which I have attributed to the Polemonian Academy. But this degree of liberty would be quite unsurprising in the later and better-attested tradition of Platonic exegesis, and there is no reason to think that the early Academy was any more cautious or conservative in the matter. On the contrary, Xenocrates had already shown considerable inventiveness in his own readings of the *Timaeus*,⁸² and, by establishing his celebrated principle that in that dialogue Plato says some things not because they are literally true, but merely 'for expository purposes' (διδασκαλίας χάριν),⁸³ he had effectively opened the floodgates to just this kind of exploitation of the Platonic gospel. Indeed, nothing that I have attributed to Polemo – including the reinterpretation of 'necessity' – stretches the apparent meaning of Plato's text as spectacularly as Xenocrates' non-genetic reading of Timaeian 'creation', a reading which nevertheless remains dominant among Platonic interpreters to this day, and perhaps justifiably so.

If I am even half-right in my reconstruction, the continuity between the physics of the late fourth-century Academy and the physics of the Stoa is a profound one. Zeno, it seems, really did learn his physics from his Platonist teacher Polemo. Given that he was hardly likely to

⁸² I am referring not only to his theory of indivisible lines, as discussed and explained above, but also to his thesis εὐδαίμονα εἶναι τὸν ψυχὴν ἔχοντα *σπουδαίαν* ταύτην γὰρ ἐκάστου εἶναι δαίμονα (Aristotle, *Top.* 112a36-8), clearly based on a re-reading of *Ti.* 90c (where εὐδαιμονία is etymologised as the proper ordering of the δαίμων or immortal soul – i.e., apparently, the intellect alone) in the light of the *Phaedrus* doctrine that the entire tripartite soul is immortal.

⁸³ Aristotle, *De caelo* 280a1, with *Simpl. in Cael.* 303.34ff.

learn much physics from his other teachers, Crates, Stilpo and Diodorus, this finding should be anything but surprising. But it is the details of that debt that are really instructive. The Stoic god is immanent in *apoios ousia* and is the source of all the qualities that inhere in it. He governs providentially a singular world, which itself too is derivatively called 'god',⁸⁴ imposing his wishes with absolute necessity thanks to an unbreakable nexus of physical causes, while matter, which is infinitely divisible, offers no resistance at all to the enforcement of his will. All this, and much more, was already present in the physical theory which Zeno learnt in his years as a student at the Academy.

It has not been part of my purpose in the present paper either to emphasise the differences between the two, or to contend that Stoic physics just is Academic physics in thin disguise. But again and again it is the continuity between them that stands out. Whereas Zeno's epistemology really did represent a radical break with the tradition (as Antiochus himself acknowledged), and his ethics also involved a major rift with Polemo, his physics was less a departure from Academic physics than a continuation, refinement and enrichment of it. Undoubtedly he and his Stoic colleagues took the discipline forward in a variety of ways. But those developments were scarcely more radical than Polemo's departures from the physics of his own predecessor Xenocrates had been. What really makes Zeno's physics novel is that, by leaving the Academy, he was resigning all allegiance to Plato's authority. Unlike Xenocrates and Polemo, he could take what he liked from the physics he had studied, reject what he disliked, and add what he wished from other traditions or from his own speculation, without ever having to square the resultant theory with the letter of Plato's text. For example, he could accept the two-principle theory, and in particular the providential immanence of god, and develop the biological side of Plato's cosmology, while at the same time happily leaving out the geometrical aspects of Platonist physics, the tripartition of the soul, and no doubt much more. This liberation is the reason why Stoic physics represents a significant new departure within ancient thought. But we should not necessarily expect to see the fruits of that liberation appear all at once.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ That individual parts of the world too are gods is yet another feature shared by the *Timaeus* (e.g. 40a-41a) and Stoicism.

⁸⁵ The Platonic background to Stoic physics has now received an exceptionally full and valuable examination in Reydam-Schils 1999. Where I see a direct legacy,

What innovations, then, can be attributed to Zeno himself? Varro, still speaking for Antiochus later in book I of the *Academica*, offers us no more than two Zenonian modifications to his predecessors' physics (*Ac.* I 39). First, he notes, Zeno rejected Aristotle's postulation of a fifth element as the stuff of both stars and minds (already sketched at lines 30-3 of our text). The reason for this, he adds, was Zeno's confidence in fire as the creative agent, and even as the stuff of minds. And it is no doubt true that, at least with respect to the Academic doctrine which we have been examining, with its *pair* of active principles, the causal primacy of one single element, fire, in Stoic physics does represent a departure, or at least a shift of emphasis. Whether Zeno in this regard saw himself as reverting to Xenocrates' version of Academic physics, or to Heraclitus,⁸⁶ or simply as responding to Aristotle by arguing that fire could do all the jobs assigned by Aristotle to his fifth element,⁸⁷ is hard to judge. But there is a good chance that one important factor here was Cleanthes' collaboration, and that via both Zeno and Cleanthes Heracliteanism really did play a part in the development of Stoic physics.⁸⁸ At all events, Varro's brief reference to the fire doctrine should almost certainly be expanded to include the doctrine of a periodic world-conflagration.⁸⁹ As we have learnt, in the Academic scheme the world is, if only thanks to god's benevolence, everlasting. Zeno's substitution of

however, she sees the relation between Platonist and Stoic physics more in terms of a two-way dialectic.

⁸⁶ Cf. Dillon 1977, 26-7.

⁸⁷ Lines 30-3 are included in Aristotle *De philosophia* fr. 27 Ross, but the attribution of the doctrine to this work is controversial. At all events, it is not drawn from the *De caelo*, where aether is *not* the stuff of minds. Possibly the nearest Aristotle comes to hinting at any such view in his surviving works is *GA* 736b33-737a1.

⁸⁸ See Long 1975-6 for Cleanthes' crucial contribution to Stoic Heracliteanism, and Schofield 1991, esp. 81 for Zeno's. If I am right in Sedley 1998, 78-82, one specific detail of Stoic cosmology that was derived from Heraclitus, or at any rate not from the Polemonian theory, is the thesis that the heavenly bodies are nurtured by exhalations of terrestrial moisture, not fire (the latter thesis, which stems from *Ti.* 63b, 63e, and which I argue to be Polemonian, is included in the cosmology targeted at Lucr. I 1088-91).

⁸⁹ I agree with Dillon 1977, 83 that *ekpyrōsis* is absent from the passage on Academic physics. Görler 1994, 950 suggests that the dissolution of matter into its parts (lines 41-3) reflects Antiochus' veiled attempt to make the 'Academic' theory anticipate Stoic *ekpyrōsis*. But for a much closer Stoic analogue to these lines see Arius Did. fr. 20 = *SVF* I 87, τὰ δὲ μέρη ταύτης [*sc.* τῆς οὐσίας] οὐκ αἰεὶ ταῦτα διαμένειν ἀλλὰ διαρεῖσθαι καὶ συγχεῖσθαι.

ekpyrōsis was probably intended not just as an improvement on the Platonic scheme⁹⁰ — periodic reduction of the world to fire being in his eyes an even greater manifestation of divine benevolence than its indefinite perpetuation — but also, however unhistorically, as part of this same injection of Heraclitean insights into the cosmology.⁹¹

More intriguing is the second of Varro's two listed divergences:

discrepebat etiam ab iisdem quod nullo modo arbitrabatur quidquam effici posse ab ea [sc. natura] quae expers esset corporis, cuius generis Xenocrates et superiores etiam animum esse dixerant, nec vero aut quod efficeret aliquid aut quod efficeretur posse esse non corpus.

He also differed from these same people in that he thought it quite impossible for anything to be acted upon by a nature which lacked all body — Xenocrates and his predecessors having said that even the mind was of this kind — or indeed for anything that acted or was acted upon to be non-bodily.

Here at last we may seem to have come to Zeno's major departure from Platonism — his equation of existence with corporeality.⁹² But even in this case some caution is called for. Varro remarks that the

⁹⁰ For *ekpyrōsis* as an improvement on Timaeon physics, cf. Reydam-Schils 1999, 77-8. For its providential aspects see also J. Mansfeld, 'Theology', in K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfeld, M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge 2000, 452-78, at 468-9.

⁹¹ The primacy of fire in first-generation Stoic physics was largely replaced by that of *pneuma* in Chrysippean Stoicism. Was Chrysippus then deliberately reverting to Polemonian physics? This is not impossible: in trying to wrest the initiative from the New Academics, he might well have found some tactical advantage in presenting himself as more authentically Academic than they were. However, it is hard to be sure that any reversion was involved. Polemonian physics made both fire and air active, but we have no information as to how these two were ranked, or combined, in causal explanations. Zeno emphasised fire's supremacy, but there is no reason to think that he denied that air is active too. Chrysippus, influenced by medical theory (see F. Solmsen, 'Greek Philosophy and the Discovery of the Nerves', *Museum Helveticum* 18 (1961), 150-97), privileged *pneuma*, usually a combination of air and fire (though see n. 38 above), in cosmic explanations, while still retaining supremacy for fire at least in the *ekpyrosis* theory. It is hard to be confident that, in this, Chrysippus really was closer to Polemonian physics than Zeno had been. (In general, I am not here tackling the question to what extent Chrysippus may have relied on his own direct reading either of the *Timaeus* or of the Polemonian Academics; his work certainly sometimes reflects *Ti.* closely, e.g. *Plu. Comm. not.* 1052C-D, comparing *Ti.* 33c.)

⁹² How even this move has a Platonic background in the *Sophist* is brilliantly discussed by J. Brunschwig, 'La théorie stoïcienne du genre suprême et l'ontologie platonicienne', in J. Barnes, M. Mignucci, eds., *Matter and Metaphysics*, Naples 1988, 19-127; repr. in Brunschwig, *Papers in Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge 1994, 92-157.

defence of incorporeal existence was characteristic of 'Xenocrates and his predecessors' — a virtual concession, it may seem, that the final generation of the old Academy under Polemo had no longer been entirely wedded to the same view. Looking back at the Polemonian theory in the light of this comment, one can feel some sympathy for Varro's way of putting it.

Technically, it is true, the Academics do not consider each of their principles a body: at lines 13-15, as I interpreted them above, 'body' is the guise that matter takes on only thanks to being informed by some quality. Even if such a reading is not accepted, these lines put it beyond doubt that neither principle, taken on its own, is *yet* a body (hence *iam* in line 14). To that extent, the Academic theory does differ from Stoic physics, which like many I firmly believe⁹³ to have considered both the active and the passive principle each to be bodily — the Stoic hallmark of body being the capacity to act *or* be acted upon.⁹⁴

On the other hand, in this same Academic theory it is implicit that everything, presumably including mind (cf. line 31), is somehow generated out of the two principles. Varro does not record how mind is constituted, but we should remember that in the *Timaeus* 'divisible *ousia*' is one of the components of the rational soul, and that our Academics, unlike Xenocrates, seem to have interpreted this 'divisible *ousia*' as matter. Besides, given their view that the active power cannot exist except in matter (lines 8-13), they may have felt compelled to give the rational soul some kind of material component in order to respect Plato's doctrine that it is capable of discarnate existence.⁹⁵ Here we are getting into speculation which goes far beyond anything that Varro's brief report can be said to warrant. But some

⁹³ Cf. A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Cambridge 1987, sections 44-5.

⁹⁴ For a well-argued recent defence of this view, see Reydam-Schils 1997, 457-9. When the Academics call the active principle a 'power', they may even be consciously exploiting Plato's argument in the *Sophist* (247d-e) that 'power', namely the power to act or be acted upon, *rather than corporeality*, is the true criterion of being. This however would leave the question how matter, which is not described as *vis*, gets its being, suggesting that *vis* here may represent δύναμις in its sense 'active power', rather than mere (active or passive) 'capacity'.

⁹⁵ The capacity for discarnate existence is one required by the human rational soul, but not by the world-soul. Hence in the case of the world-soul, which also has 'divisible *ousia*' as a component, it may have been possible to interpret this as describing the world-soul purely *qua* enmattered, while leaving a further guise in which it is identifiable solely with the active principle.

such reconstruction is encouraged by the need to make sense of Varro's very striking way of putting things — that is, his clear hesitation to trace the Academic thesis of the mind's incorporeality⁹⁶ later than the generation of Xenocrates.

Possibly then, by contrast with the radical incorporeality doctrine of the earlier Platonic tradition, the Polemonian Academics are already taking a first step towards Stoic corporealism. If so, however, it was left for Zeno to introduce and defend the Stoic thesis that even at the primary level the two principles — god as well as matter — must be bodies if they are to interact in the way the Academics had described.⁹⁷

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⁹⁶ This includes *Ti.* 46d. If they were aiming to observe Plato's strictures here, they must have thought it sufficient to retain the incorporeality of the active principle itself.

⁹⁷ My thanks, for written comments, to Gabor Betegh, John Dillon, Dorothea Frede, Michael Frede, Brad Inwood, Tony Long, Jaap Mansfeld, Roberto Polito, Gretchen Reydam-Schils, Bob Sharples and Emidio Spinelli; to many participants in the Symposium Hellenisticum for oral comments; and to Charles Brittain for further discussion of some of the same material.

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THEODICY AND PROVIDENTIAL CARE IN STOICISM

DOROTHEA FREDE

ὦ πόποι, οἷον δὴ νῦν θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται.
ἐξ ἡμέων γάρ φασι κάκ' ἔμμεναι. οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ μόνον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν

Homer, *Od.* I 33

1. *The God(s) of the Greek Philosophers*

Given the importance of oracles, prophecies, and other divine interventions for Greek religious and public life in general the philosophers of the archaic and the classical period were remarkably reticent on these issues. It is as if traditional lore that dominated the fine arts, epic, and drama was by general consent beneath the philosopher's notice.¹ For with the exception of Xenophanes, philosophers did not even criticise the capricious activities of the gods of public belief.² The Xenophanean condemnation of the anthropomorphic divinities may have been regarded as a sufficient verdict on the issue of gods who look like mortals, and who lie and cheat and commit adultery. To be sure, there was a kind of general acknowledgement of divine powers among the early philosophers from Thales on, if the profession that 'there are gods everywhere' originated with him. And Heraclitus treats his all-pervasive λόγος as divine. We should also not ignore the fact that Parmenides' inspired voyage in his poem is guided by the Goddess of Right. But these divine powers are very abstract and quite remote from any direct

¹ As Gerson 1990, remarks at the beginning of his monograph: "That the Pre-Socratic philosophers conceived of their *logoi* about divinity as different from and superior to other *logoi* seems plain." He attributes the development of natural theology in early Greek philosophy to the need for a super-human, very long-lasting or everlasting power that is already manifest in the Milesians: "science, at least as many of the Pre-Socratics conceived of it, needed god or gods" (2-3). On the earlier Greek philosophers' theology cf. now also Mansfeld 1999, 452-4.

² Though Cicero in *De Divinatione* I 5 and 87 ascribes belief in divination to all Greek philosophers except Xenophanes and Epicurus, his claim is quite general and unsubstantiated.

concern with human affairs. The concern for overall cosmic order and harmony leaves aside questions of human good and evil. How little Greek philosophers thought of direct divine interference in worldly affairs at the end of the classical age is shown above all by Aristotle's Unmoved Mover whose thoughts are concerned exclusively with himself, because contact with inferior objects would mean a lessening of his perfection.³ And equally famous is Epicurus' location of the gods in intermundane places to keep them out of contact with the troublesome world.⁴

Socrates with his divine mission, his divine warning-sign and his belief in dreams and oracles seems to be an exception to this distanced and impersonal religious stance, and if Xenophon is to be believed then he did not only profess faith in an omni-present divinity (*Mem.* I 119) but also made a convert of his associate Aristodemus by a highly refined argument from design on the basis of rational teleological premises (*Mem.* I 14).⁵ Though the reconstruction of the historical Socrates' beliefs and theological convictions is a vexed question his influence may account for the frequent references to divine elements and powers in Plato. For those appeals are by no means confined to his myths, they recur throughout his work.⁶ It is in fact difficult to disagree with Auguste Diès' satirical remark that there is all too much divinity: "Tout est dieu ou divin chez ce trop divin Platon".⁷ Satire aside, the importance of Plato's demand for a flight to another world and for the famous ὁμοίωσις θεῶν (*Theaetetus* 176b) seems to speak for a more intimate relation between humans and gods. Yet a closer look shows that Plato's references to divine powers in most of his writings amount to little more than the conviction that the world is ordered in an intelligent fashion and provides a model

³ Aristotle, *Metaph.* A 9, 1074b17-35.

⁴ Epicurus in Cicero, *De natura deorum* I 45-51. The remoteness of the Epicurean Gods in the Epicurean tradition is still a matter of controversy among experts, cf. Mansfeld 1999, 455-7.

⁵ This argument that in some aspects parallels Plato's criticism of mechanical causation in the *Phaedo* may have influenced the Stoic conception of divine providence from early on, as Sextus Empiricus claims (*Adversus Mathematicos* IX I 101). Since Cicero refers to it and sees a close resemblance to the cosmology in Plato's *Timaeus* and the *Laws* (*N.D.* I 30-32; II 18; III 27) it must have been a set piece in the debate. J. Mansfeld rightly reminded me of the importance of this Socratic argument.

⁶ Though the tenet in the *Phaedo* (62b-c) that humans are in the care of the gods and their property supposedly is of Pythagorean origin Socrates supports it.

⁷ Diès 1927, 555.

for humans to imitate in their own social and private lives. As has often been remarked, the Form of the Good seems to make personal divinities otiose. To be sure, the *Timaeus* does make use of the notion of a divine creator. But not only is the depiction of this divine craftsman shrouded in metaphorical speech, Plato also confines his activities to the furnishing of the cosmic order as a whole. The rest is left to the 'younger gods', i. e. the powers of nature. And Plato displays a good deal of unease as to how the conventional deities are to fit in his cosmic order. If he squeezes in Uranus, Gaia, and all the rest of the traditional pantheon, it is with the declared purpose of complying with tradition (*Ti.* 40d-41a): 'We cannot avoid believing in the children of the gods, even though the accounts of them lack plausible or compelling proofs.'⁸ At the same time Plato emphasises that humans are fully responsible for their own lives, just as he does in the Myth of Er at the end of the *Republic*. The 'Law of Lachesis' is both a witness to the limits of divine responsibility and an assertion of human freedom: once we have chosen our way of life our fates are sealed. Instead of blaming the gods for their unfortunate lives, humans should blame themselves (*R.* 617d-e): 'Your daemon and guardian spirit will not be assigned to you by lot; you will choose him [...]. The responsibility lies with the one who makes the choice; the god has none.' The maxim that the blame is the chooser's, not the god's seems to suffice in Plato's eyes to exculpate god from all responsibility for human ills. No further theodicy is attempted. The *Timaeus* clearly echoes the *Republic's* general excuse of god for the evil that may befall mankind. Having issued as a general law the pattern of the transmigration of human souls from better to worse or from worse to better, the divine maker washes his hands of all further responsibility by leaving the furnishing of the world to the younger gods (*Ti.* 42d):

Having set out all these ordinances to them — which he did to exempt himself from responsibility for any evil they might afterwards do — the god proceeded to sow some of them into the Earth [...]. After the sowing he handed over to the young gods the task of weaving mortal bodies.

⁸ As far as religion is concerned, Plato does not therefore depart from the *Republic's* stance that religious life should be left to tradition because it is quite outside of the realm of human knowledge (*R.* 427b-c): 'We have no knowledge of these things, and in establishing our city, if we have any understanding, we won't be persuaded to trust them to anyone other than the ancestral guide.'

Especially the recurrence of the word ἀναίτιος ('exempt from responsibility') must be a conscious reminder of the *Republic's* exoneration of the gods of human misdeeds. Divine responsibility is confined to the general laws and to the equipment of a universe as far as befits corporeal entities through the administration of nature. Plato clearly treats cosmic order and moral good and evil as separate issues.

2. *Plato on Divine Providence in Laws X*

But Plato, notoriously, did not stick consistently to this attitude concerning the distance between the gods and human affairs. In the *Laws* he takes great care to provide appropriate regulations for his citizens' religion by incorporating traditional cults and oracles in the life of his Cretan society. In fact, the religious life with its various rituals and ceremonies in his second-best city is largely in agreement with the religious cult of the Olympic divinities customary in fifth and fourth-century Greece.⁹ Nor is the reason for this compliance hard to find: common worship of the traditional gods as an integral part of public and private life in its many facets is an important factor in the preservation of the community's moral fabric.¹⁰ Given this purpose, the *Laws'* detailed regulation of its citizens' religious practices does actually not represent a departure from the attitude advocated in the *Republic*, viz. to leave religion to tradition. The main difference between the provisions in the *Republic* and in the *Laws* lies in the fact that in his earlier writing Plato contents himself with a summary recommendation while in the *Laws* he works out the details. If he spends a lot of time and trouble with these details it is due to his concern to adjust the traditional practices to the special conditions in his Cretan city. So there is nothing revolutionary in Plato's concern with religion in the program he designs in his last political manifesto.

⁹ Morrow 1990, 401 emphasizes the strong affinity of the regulations of religion in Plato's Cretan city with the common customs in Greece: "Plato deliberately pours new wine into old bottles".

¹⁰ As Morrow observes, 468 f.: "Religion is not something apart from other areas of life; it penetrates them all. It gives authority to the magistrates and the laws they enforce; it sanctifies family ties; it is the patron of the arts and crafts; it safeguards contracts and oaths, and the rights of strangers and suppliants; it is the partner in all recreation, dance, and song. [...] This area of tradition and reverence is what Plato calls the divine sanctions to the performance of our duties. [...] In its formal aspects it is but little modified for the needs of his state."

If religious life in Plato's Magnesia for the most part looks disappointingly conventional, the picture changes drastically in the tenth book when he turns to a proper philosophical discussion of the foundations of theology. The occasion to divulge his own, *prima facie* more revolutionary, ideas on the principles of theology is provided by the need to combat atheism (*Lg.* 885b-907d). To refute atheistic tendencies among the citizens, Plato famously resorts to a type of natural theology that has divine providence for human beings as one of its main articles of faith. This philosophical excursion is not just a sign that Plato in his old age realised that the time had passed when reverence for traditional religious practices was a sufficient foundation of public law and morality. He must also have welcomed the occasion to counter the 'secularist' challenge by the scientists of his own time with an explanation of the rational basis of his own belief in a divine order. For these reasons Plato's natural theology in the *Laws* provides a foil for the Stoic conception of providence and theodicy. A comparison and contrast with Plato will at the same time be my justification for avoiding a problem that seems otherwise quite unavoidable in a discussion of the Stoic view on providence: that is the problem of determinism and its compatibility with providential care.¹¹ If I dodge this issue it is because no-one can do justice to this problem within the limits of a paper any longer. I will therefore start with a somewhat lengthy overview of Plato's reasoning.¹²

As the Athenian Stranger states at the outset the general readiness to commit offences against the gods in word or deed is due to 'three possible misapprehensions' (*Lg.* 885b): (1) that the gods do not exist. (2) That they exist but take no thought for the human race. (3) That the gods can be influenced by sacrifices and supplications and can easily be won over. — The third of these three misapprehensions and its refutation (905d-907d) can be ignored here since the question of the gods' immunity against bribes is irrelevant for our topic.¹³ It is only Plato's arguments against the first two 'misapprehensions' that

¹¹ The complexity of this problematic in all its ramifications is expounded with admirable clarity and patience in Bobzien 1998.

¹² In order to avoid digression, the question of the coherence of Plato's theory of divine providence will be left aside here. For a more thorough discussion and a survey of the relevant literature cf. Carone 1994. The plausibility of her conclusions about the extent of human influence in the cosmos cannot be discussed here.

¹³ The Athenian Stranger's condemnation of the belief in the venality of the gods is very much in line with the complaint of Adeimantus in the *Republic* (362d-367a).

are important for a proper assessment of his views on theology and on the possibility of divine providential care for mankind.

(1) The first argument consists of a proof that the universe is a work of art due to divine reason (885e-899e). Though this title would let one expect a version of the 'argument from design' as a proof of the existence of the gods in general, this is not how Plato proceeds. For though Cleinias right away cites the beauty of the universe as a proof of the gods' existence, the Athenian Stranger does not immediately seize the offer of such an easy victory.¹⁴ Plato's aim is not to defeat general disbelief by a simple appeal to cosmic order. His target is mechanical physicalism, which he regards as a serious challenge to the belief in a divine origin of the universe because it seems to make divine powers superfluous.¹⁵ On the 'mechanist' view, the heavenly bodies are just fiery stones that cannot be concerned ($\phi\rho\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$) with the world at all. To defeat that mechanical world-view Plato argues for a kind of 'rational animism' as the ultimate cosmic principle. This argument, in spite of certain unclarities and omissions,¹⁶ follows a carefully worked out strategy. Its first step is a rebuttal of the view that the soul is a mere epiphenomenon that results from an organism's physical conditions (886d; 891c). In order to prove the primacy of the soul as an active principle Plato subjects the concept of art to a closer scrutiny. Materialists are simply mistaken if they treat art as a cultural late-comer and attribute all natural processes to mechanical necessity and chance. If they were right, all artefacts, including law and justice, would have to be considered as un-natural and mere figments of the human mind. Against this 'misconception' the Athenian Stranger points out that art must be

¹⁴ For Cleinias' 'argument from design' (886a): 'Just look at the earth and the sun and the stars and the universe in general; look at the wonderful procession of the seasons and its articulation into years and months!' Quotations from the *Laws* follow Saunders' translation in J. M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato, Complete Works*, Indianapolis 1997.

¹⁵ Cf. Plato's disapproval of Anaxagoras' mechanical interpretation of a cosmic *nous* in the *Phaedo*. That the criticism in the *Laws* includes the atomists is more than likely, but it also criticizes mechanistic tendencies among astronomers of his own day quite generally.

¹⁶ Plato leaves undecided many points that are not immediately relevant for the defeat of atheism: there is no clear decision between monotheism or polytheism (one world-soul vs. the souls of the heavenly bodies, 897b-899c). Nor is the relation between soul and *nous* sufficiently explained (897b2). Equally unclear is the question whether the cosmic soul(s) need(s) all the psychic functions enumerated (896c-d; 896e-897a). In some cases Plato explicitly mentions the need to sidestep difficulties: looking for the nature of reason directly might 'blind' mortal eyes (897d-e).

the ordering force to which the universe owes its harmony and constancy. The acceptance of an 'artful organization' of the universe has important consequences: If the human mind is akin to the cosmic force that orders everything for the best, then morality is likewise a product of divine reason and closely related to the order of the cosmos as a whole (890d). Thus Plato's argument for the existence of the gods is designed at the very outset to dispel the view that morality has no higher basis than human invention and convention.

Though the argument itself is introduced as a novelty (892d3: *neoprepes*), its main premise — that the soul is a self-mover and therefore the originator of all further change — is familiar from Plato's earlier dialogues. That only the soul can fulfil the function of a self-generating force is justified on the ground that soul is the principle of life: only living things are capable of spontaneous motion without external prompting (895c). The novelty here consists in the use of this conception as a premise in an argument for the existence of the gods. In the main, the argument anticipates the so-called 'physical argument' that there must be an absolute first cause since there cannot be an infinite causal series (894e-895a): If all motion is either self-generated or transmitted by other sources, there must be a self-maintaining first cause in the universe. But Plato does not simply use this 'animistic' premise to infer that what has soul also possesses reason and hence is god, as one might expect. In fact he argues with unusual circumspection that the soul in addition must have reason. In his argument he assumes an analogy, not an identity, between the rotation of the heavens and the procedure of reason. Where the *Timaeus* postulates an identity between the two processes the *Laws* takes care to establish a mere resemblance (897e: *eikôn*). The tertium quid consists in the fact that there is a given central point both in the case of the movement of reason and in the circular motion of the stars. Just as thought has a focus and continuity, so does circular motion: 'In both cases the motion is determined by a single plan and order and it is regular, uniform, always at the same point in space, around a fixed center, in the same position relative to other objects'. What is the point of this unexpected meticulousness in the depiction of the divine mind in the *Laws*? Since there is no divine craftsman here, a demiurgic account would clearly be out of place.¹⁷ Thus the ultimate order of the world cannot here be attributed to an

¹⁷ Though Plato once claims superiority for divine over mortal craftsmen (902e), not much is made of that comparison in the *Laws*.

‘unspeakable father’ whose wisdom is quite beyond human comprehension. Instead, Plato is concerned with explaining the nature of a world-mind that rules the world with providential care. This change in perspective also explains why Plato leaves undecided how, precisely, each stellar soul ‘drives’ the fiery ball that is its body and whether the stellar souls move their bodies in the same way as our souls quicken our bodies (898e-899a). Plato’s concern here is to establish that the souls of the stars are deities capable of rational thought. For this is what the atheist has to refute if he wants to attribute the heavenly order to mere chance and mechanical necessity.

(2) The proof that the heavenly order as a whole is due to divine reason serves as the basis for discarding the ‘second misapprehension’, that the gods do not care about human beings (899e-905d). Its refutation purports to show that cosmic providence at large allows for a ‘fine-tuning’ to serve the special needs of mankind. The Athenian Stranger is especially intent on this point in his theodicy because he is well aware that the general experience that wickedness flourishes is a strong argument for atheism; it is a popular prejudice that has been fortified by the poets and other thinkers throughout the ages (899e). To meet that prejudice the Athenian stranger does not — as one might expect — resort to moral tales about the gruesome end of famous criminals to show that in the long run wickedness does not pay.¹⁸ He also avoids the *Republic*’s claim that the criminal soul of a tyrant is in a state of abject misery. Instead he strongly affirms direct divine control of human affairs. For he claims that the virtue of the gods is not of the kind that permits neglect of small affairs in favour of large issues (900c ff.): It would be incompatible with divine omniscience if they overlooked the details; just as it would be incompatible with the gods’ perfection if they did not act in accordance with their knowledge.¹⁹ Since everything in the universe is the property of the gods they are sure to take care of their possessions. This argument a fortiori is supplemented with the claim that the gods ‘know, see, and hear all things’ — a description that suggests not only divine omniscience but also ubiquitous physical presence that clearly echoes Xenophanes.²⁰

¹⁸ That such stories were quite popular can be seen from Plutarch’s collection in *De sera numinis vindicta*.

¹⁹ Just as he does in the *Timaeus* Plato here also keeps his distance from the conventional gods of Greek religion whom he mentions in his proofs only once in passing as ‘the gods sanctioned by law’ (Lg. 904a-b).

²⁰ Cf. Xenophanes 21B 24 DK ‘οὐλος ὁραῖ, οὐλος δὲ νοεῖ, οὐλος δὲ τ’ ἀκούει’

If such fanfare promises an elaborate explanation of how the divine powers take proper care of all states of affairs Plato disappoints such expectations in what follows. Not only is there no detailed account of how divine providence works, there is not even a clue as to how the divinities up high could take notice of what happens in the sublunary sphere. Thus the question by what means everything in the world is ordered for the best remains quite unsolved. Plato seems to regard the postulate as a sufficient justification that no true master of any art confines himself to the large duties of his job while neglecting the small ones. This principle applies to god more than to anyone else: If everything is well ordered on a large scale, then this beneficent order will also comprise the situation of the lowly creatures down here on earth (901b-903a).

The Athenian Stranger's subsequent attempt to discredit sceptical doubts about divine providence by a 'charm' (ἐπὶ ᾧ) makes no further use of the physical argument (903b-905d). Instead, it teaches the individual a moral lesson about what can reasonably be expected from divine providence and justice. First of all, the convert from atheism has to tone down personal presumptions and demands. He must realise that the universe is not arranged to serve his personal benefit; rather, he himself is just a small part in it and must strive to perform his role as a contributor to the whole. Since each individual is an integral part of the universe, everyone benefits in turn from the wellbeing of the whole. Second, divine justice is guaranteed by a principle of retribution: the soul is immortal and undergoes different phases of reincarnation: God (here in the singular and identified with the supreme King) acts like a divine chess-player, whose strategy is to assign to each soul its appropriate career and place (903d: πεπτευτής). This does not mean that humans are mere pawns on a divine chessboard. The individual is free to choose its own life, but reward and punishment are fixed by divine ordinance.²¹ After death the bad souls go to Hades, the good ones to some superterrestrial place, and no one can hope to escape divine justice, no matter what means of evasion they may choose. So the Athenian's 'charm' in essence repeats the lesson of the myths in the earlier dialogues.

and *Lg.* 901d: 'The gods know and see and hear everything, and that nothing within the range of our senses or intellect can escape them.' The 'Socratic' argument in Xenophon also presupposes divine omnipresence and omniscience (*Mem.* I 1 4 18; cf. I 1 1 19).

²¹ *Lg.* 904c8: κατὰ τὴν τῆς εἰμαρμένης τάξιν καὶ νόμον.

Sceptical doubts concerning an 'about-face' in Plato's *Laws* on the question of divine interference in worldly affairs will be confirmed in view of Plato's final explanation of what he means by such 'care'. For in the end he explicitly asserts that providential care must not saddle the gods with impossibly complicated tasks. Since the regulation of the universe would presuppose an 'infinite number of perpetually changing patterns' (904a), the divine supervisor resorts instead to the simple device of installing as a permanent institution the system of rewards and punishments in different life-cycles that is familiar from Plato's earlier myths. Care for the individual thus amounts to no more than the pattern of retribution that is established by the 'divine King' for everyone. The fiction that this description is just a 'charm' to fortify the trust in divine care absolves Plato from the duty to harmonise the presuppositions of this moral lesson with the preceding physical theology. For this reason he does not even attempt to clarify the relation between the kingly Chess-Player of the *epodê* and the cosmic deities or star-souls he appealed to in his argument against the 'mechanists'. Whether or not these divine powers can be brought in harmony, it is obvious that Plato does not argue for personal providence in the sense that the gods directly interfere in favour or disfavour of particular persons.²² Divine providence takes care of the individual only in the attenuated sense that there is an appropriate fate in store for everyone. Thus the overall picture of a 'higher justice' with rewards and punishment in the *Laws* is quite in line with Plato's earlier mythical depiction of the fate of the human soul that he first adumbrates in the *Gorgias*, and then expands on in the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*. Even the pedagogical message remains the same: in the long run it pays for the individual to lead a righteous life. Beyond such expectations there are no favours in store by the higher powers at all.²³

The important difference between Plato's earlier characterisation of the workings of divine justice and that in book ten of the *Laws* consists in the fact that here the mythical element is a mere appendix to the cosmological argument. This explains why Plato refrains from a more extensive depiction of the soul's fate after death. Instead of

²² Cf. Carone 1994, esp. 296 n. 38 on the increasingly anthropocentric conception of the cosmos as a whole.

²³ For this reason he passes severe legislation against individual shrines of his citizens. No one must think that he/she can influence the gods individually (909d3 ff.).

instigating personal fears and hopes he counts on the power of the insight that divine providence guarantees a rational world-order that benefits mankind, provided they can put that insight to good use. And this account of divine providential care of the world is at the same time deemed as a sufficient principle of theodicy. Given nature's overall provisions, Plato presents the world as a well-built house that is ready to accommodate its human inhabitants. How the occupants live in that house, whether they fare well or ill is up to their own decision and responsibility: *theos anaitios*. Plato no longer sees the need to appeal to powerful images of the souls' fate after death but relies on the persuasiveness of the conviction that the overall order of things itself is benign and therefore also just. At the same time this conviction explains his strict injunctions against atheism; for the citizens' belief in a 'senseless universe' would undermine their motivation to live a civilised life under the guidance of reason.²⁴ Plato counts on the citizens' voluntary compliance fostered by their trust in an overall benign state of the world at large. So instead of propagating belief in a kind of divine care that is tailored to the needs of the individuals, the Cretan city and its order are based on the idea of a natural world-citizenship for all of mankind.

3. *The Operations of the mens mundi in Stoicism*

It remains to be seen whether and in what sense the Stoics go beyond Plato's conception of the world as a work of art that is designed by divine reason. For at first sight there is quite some affinity between their arguments for the existence of divine providence and those advocated in the *Laws*. Like Plato, the Stoics are at the same time concerned with the accommodation of Greek religious tradition, while arguing for a natural theology on a basis of physical principles that seem quite remote from the common religious conceptions. And just as in Plato's case, it will therefore not do to take their conciliatory pronouncements that are designed to bridge that gap at face value. Hence it is necessary to subject the reports in our sources to closer scrutiny. In the case of the Stoics this is a particularly difficult task.²⁵

²⁴ Whether this conception justifies the drastic legal procedures against the atheists that cause so much dismay nowadays, is quite another matter, of course.

²⁵ It is not possible here to incorporate Bobzien's 1998, results in her magisterial treatment of the problem of freedom and determinism in Stoicism

For the evidence is quite ambiguous, not only because the reports in different sources differ, but also because they differ depending on what aspect of Stoicism is under attack: If the focus is on fate and determinism, then the alleged inflexibility and uniformity of Stoic fatal necessity are the butt of the critics' sarcasm. When religious questions are at issue, the focus is rather on the scope and plausibility of Stoic pantheism and superstition. Thus the Epicureans caricature the Stoic providence as an 'old hag of a fortune-teller' and a 'prying busybody who foresees and thinks of and notices everything and deems that everything is his concern.'²⁶ We shall leave the problem of fatal necessity aside here and concentrate on the 'providential aspect'. Our main source will be Cicero's *De natura deorum*, on the somewhat risky assumption that he treats the account in his source(s) as a unitary — if not altogether coherent — report of the Stoic position.²⁷ Cicero starts out with a general division of the argument about the nature of the gods in four points (II 3): (1) The existence of the gods, (2) their nature, (3) their governance of the world, (4) their care for mankind. Though the Stoic origin of this general division has sometimes been disputed,²⁸ and digressions at times make it hard to keep track of the overall scheme, there can be little doubt that the fourfold division represents the standard procedure followed by the authorities of the Old Stoa. If Cicero's immediate source in the second book was Posidonius — as many scholars nowadays assume²⁹ — the doxographical digressions must be due to

(esp. chs. 1.4; 2.2). Nor can sufficient attention be paid to differences among the Stoics through the centuries. As Bobzien points out, 13: "The central position providence has in later writings on fate is not documented before the turn of the millenium."

²⁶ Cicero, *N.D.* I 18; 54-55. The quotations generally follow Rackham's 1933 translation, but note has been taken of the new translation with notes by P. G. Walsh 1997.

²⁷ For a more comprehensive treatment of this subject that takes proper care of the widely divergent sources on Stoic theology as well as of the divergent opinions within Stoicism and of the ample secondary literature, cf. the monograph by Dragona-Monachou 1976.

²⁸ A. E. Pease 1955-8, II 543-4. The quality of the Stoic proofs of the existence of the gods is not here under scrutiny, for a short investigation of their presuppositions cf. Schofield 1980.

²⁹ Cicero himself refers to Posidonius' treatise *De natura deorum* in five books at *N.D.* I 123 as his source of the critique of Epicureanism. It is very likely that his depiction of Stoic theology followed Posidonius as well (cf. Rackham 1933, xvii; Kleywegt 1961; Walsh 1997, xxix f.), rather than a compilation in some mysterious 'handbook' (cf. Philippson, *Pauly-Wissowa* VII A 1, 1935, 'Tullius', 1155 and Gawlick/Görler 1994, 1044).

Posidonius' attempt to accommodate special accounts of the three patriarchs of the Stoic school, while keeping the overall unity of Stoic doctrine intact.³⁰ At the same time Posidonius must be responsible for the intrusion of Platonic and Aristotelian elements in Cicero's account of the Stoic theory that make it even harder to follow the overall course of the argument.³¹

From the start Cicero clearly treats the Stoics as his main witnesses for the conviction that there is providential care for humans by the gods. At the beginning of *De natura deorum* he introduces this very question as the fundamental question of theology. He claims that no one would even be interested in the question of the existence of the gods unless they care about mortals (I 3):

For there are and have been philosophers who hold that the gods exercise no control over human affairs whatever. But if their opinion is the true one, how can piety, reverence or religion exist? For all these are tributes which it is our duty to render in purity and holiness to the divine powers solely on the assumption that they take notice of them, and that some service has been rendered by the immortal gods to the race of men. But if on the contrary the gods have neither the power nor the will to aid us, if they pay no heed to us at all and take no notice of our actions, if they can assert no possible influence upon the life of men, what ground have we for rendering any sort of worship, honour or prayer to the immortal gods?

While the alleged theology of the Epicureans turns out to be quite deficient in that respect the Stoics are supposed to do better. In his opening speech in the second book Balbus, the spokesman for Stoicism in the *De natura deorum*, promises a proof of the all-encompassing care provided by the gods. This preview lets us expect a benign administration of the world of a kind that goes much

³⁰ The inclusion of special arguments by Cleanthes (13-15), Chrysippus (16-19) and Zeno (22) cause some repetitiousness but this may be due to Cicero's attempt to combine doxography with the overall Stoic account. The interdependence between the four points of argument (the gods' existence, their nature, their government of the universe and their care for humans) makes a certain repetitiousness unavoidable anyway.

³¹ Cf. the quite un-Stoic distinction of three causes: nature, force and will (II 44): No member of the Old Stoa would have separated nature and the divine will (cf. Zeno's definition of nature in II 57: 'ignem artificiosum'; 58: 'artifex consultrix et provida utilitatum opportunitatumque omnium'). The *N.D.* also famously contains 'Aristotle's Cave', i.e. his argument for the existence of the gods taken from the lost dialogue *On philosophy*, that shows how people who spent all their life underground will react to the sudden confrontation with the beauty of heaven and the richness of nature on earth (II 95). Cf. also Long-Sedley 1987 I, 332; Furley 1989, Appendix.

further than that suggested by Plato in the *Laws*. For though Balbus repudiates the mythological monsters of old like the Chimaera, he does believe in 'a manifestation of divine power by bodily presence' (II 6). If Balbus is to be trusted, Roman history was full of incidents that involve divine ephiphanies and interventions. He claims that the divine twins, Castor and Pollux, repeatedly acted as patron saints on behalf of the Romans in moments of crisis. Though Balbus does not wish to support the Homeric tales about the gods, he is convinced that there are divine powers that come to the aid of mortals even in his own time and age.³²

But such resort to folk-lore notwithstanding, reflection on the general principles of the natural philosophy of the Old Stoa must cause scepticism with respect to the seriousness of their belief in personal providence and a corresponding theodicy. Such scepticism is due to the following reasons: If they firmly believed in a rational world-order, why should they — how could they — at the same time plead for personal providence? For an all pervasive divine logos that determines the cosmic development in strict regularity, so that every new world-cycle repeats the same pattern down to the minutest details, seems to preclude individual care.³³ What is there to provide for? If the doctrine of the eternal recurrence holds at first sight there does not seem to be any room for special treatment of individuals. Indeed, the strong emphasis on a uniform world-order (II 56: 'praising heaven for its absolute order, accuracy, calculation and regularity') would seem to make particular care for individuals quite implausible. Already Zeno's conception of fate as a 'craftsmanlike fire having a method or path marked out for it to follow', suggests that its ways are unalterably settled according to fixed patterns; that there is a predetermination of all events in a *series causarum* from the dawn of creation seems to have become the standard depiction of Stoic fatalism by Cicero's time.³⁴ Furthermore, the claim that humans can

³² II 6: 'Often has the sound of the voices of the Fauns, often has the apparition of a divine form compelled anyone that is not either feeble-minded or impious to admit the real presence of the gods.' As Walsh 1997, XXV points out, though the religion of the Romans was less anthropomorphic than that of the Greeks, it was nevertheless a 'bargaining religion'. Cicero therefore has special reasons for emphasizing the aspect of mutual give-and-take.

³³ According to Diogenes Laertius (VII 147) the Stoics explicitly denied anthropomorphic deities. On the Stoic doctrine of eternal recurrence, cf. Stobaeus *Eclogae* I 171.2; Eusebius, *PE* XV 18 1-3.

³⁴ Aetius, *Placita* I 28.4, Cic. *Div.* I 125: 'Fatum autem id apello, quod Graeci εἰμαρμένην, id est ordinem seriemque causarum, cum causa causae nexa rem ex se

do no better than submit to the dictates of fate is treated as a basic tenet in Stoicism. As Cleanthes' prayer for a willing spirit to accept the decrees of Zeus indicates, compliance with the world-order seems all a Stoic can wish for.³⁵ Who can forget Seneca's simile of the dog that is tied to a cart with the option to either run along willingly or be dragged along anyway?³⁶ There is no indication that the dog might persuade the cart-driver to let him off the leash. None of these features of Stoicism seem to be easily reconciled with the notion that the gods make special provisions for mankind in general, let alone for individual persons.

In view of the fact that the pronouncements of the Stoics on providence seem to jar with their general principles, the suspicion arises that they may have accepted the doctrine of personal providence for pedagogical reasons only. That religion serves as a foundation of public morality is a conviction that Cicero expresses repeatedly. It is no accident that he advocates this view in the passage following the one quoted above (I 3-4):

Piety however, like the rest of the virtues, cannot exist in mere outward show and pretence; and, with piety, reverence and religion must likewise disappear. And when these are gone, life soon becomes a welter of disorder and confusion; and in all probability the disappearance of piety towards the gods will entail the disappearance of loyalty and social union among men as well, and of justice itself, the queen of all the virtues.

The conviction that piety provides support for public morality is of course not new, as Plato's *Laws* show. Nor was Plato its discoverer; it is the rationale behind the decree against intellectualist *asebeia* in Athens. Even atheists like Plato's infamous uncle Critias acknowledged the need for a popular belief, as the fragment of the satyrplay *Sisyphus* that is attributed to him shows.³⁷ Given the fact that this type of piety was quite a common concern we have to see whether the

gignat.' Bobzien 1998, 46, draws attention to differences among the earlier Stoics, as witnessed in Calcidius (*In Tim.* 144) that were often submerged in later reports.

³⁵ Epictetus *Ench.* 53. On the later reception of the Cleanthean verses cf. Bobzien 1998, 346-357.

³⁶ In Seneca's translation of Cleanthes' short payer (*Epist.* 107.10): *ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*. As Bobzien points out, however, this poignant formulation represents a later development that radicalizes Cleanthean tendencies 1998, ch. 7.3.

³⁷ Cf. 88 B 25 DK. Cicero refers to that argument disapprovingly (*N.D.* I 118) as destructive of true religion and piety.

Stoic account of providence goes beyond the justification of religious beliefs that support morality.

Since the Stoics are in agreement with Plato about the existence of an overall rational world-order, we have to find out whether and where they differ from him. So the question is whether they also treat the world like a well-built house that affords rational inhabitants all that is necessary for a good life. *Prima facie* Cicero's general introduction suggests virtual agreement between the Stoic view on a natural providential power and Plato's conception of a harmonious world-order that is designed to support a civilised life among human beings (I 22-3):

There are however, other philosophers [...] who believe that the whole world is ruled and governed by divine intelligence and reason; and not this only but also that the gods' providence watches over the life of men; for they think that the corn and other fruits of the earth, and also the weather and the seasons and the other changes of the atmosphere by which all the products of the soil are ripened and matured, are the gift of the immortal gods to the human race.³⁸

Though this pronouncement mentions special care for humans, the kind of care that is described here amounts to no more than a sufficient provision with nature's goods that are necessary for the sustenance of life. Even Aristotle could not object to this teleological world-view, though he would reject the use of the word 'providence' and regard the phrase 'gifts of the gods' as a mere metaphor. As the subsequent Stoic arguments for the existence of the gods in Cicero show, they were likewise preoccupied with a rationally ordered universe as a whole (II 13 ff.). The 'starry heaven above us' and the vast power of nature are invoked time and again to prove that the ordering force that exceeds human power and imagination must be god (15: 'ab aliqua mente tantos naturae motus gubernari'). Moreover, Cicero reports an argument in Chrysippus' name that ill accords with the notion of personal providence for humans. In his demonstration of the superiority of divine over human reason he uses the comparison of the world with a house. But the rightful inhabitants of that house are the gods, not human beings (17): Just as a well-furnished house is not built for some of the lowly creatures that might happen to live in it like mice and weasels, so the world

³⁸ That the gods must pay attention to humans is treated as the basis of all religion in the polemics against Epicurus (I 115-6). Cf. also Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1075e.

itself cannot be built for us because we, as inhabitants of the earthly region, belong to the lowliest part of the universe that is filled with too dense an atmosphere. Hence there are beings much superior to us, who are the world's true inhabitants.

Though Chrysippus subsequently claims an analogy between the elements that are part of the macro- and the microcosm which justifies a derivation of the human mind from divine reason, this argument treats human beings as just one of the elements of the world, rather than its main beneficiary. Indeed, the very superiority of the order as a whole warrants the conclusion that humans do not enjoy a privileged status. They are just integral parts of a whole that is ruled by a divine mind in the same sense that is advocated by Plato.³⁹ The principle of *sympatheia* embraces humankind just as well as all else, but it makes no special allowances for humans, let alone for particular persons. Nor is this observation surprising: The Stoic principles of physics that rely on an all embracing element, the divine rational *pneuma*, imply that there is an overall control of all things. Thus Balbus devotes quite some time and effort to explain how this fiery element manifests itself both in inanimate and in animate nature (23 ff.): 'as long as this motion remains within us, so long sensation and life remain [...]' Since this divine *pneuma* is both the unifying and the dominating force in all things, its rationality manifests itself as such in all higher entities capable of sensation and reason, including human beings.⁴⁰ Therefore nature is depicted as a provident power in all its parts, in plants and animals as well as in humans. Each creature has its own kind of perfection, and though humans are deemed more perfect than the other animals, there is something superior to human beings, namely god as the possessor of divine reason in its all-encompassing form. Hence divine wisdom surpasses that of its creatures; if it cares for their wellbeing, it does so because its provision for the whole also includes that of the parts.⁴¹

The Stoics seem to be in agreement, then, with Plato in their pre-supposition of an overall rational principle in nature that works for the general good. Like Plato, they also regard divine craftsmanship, not mechanistic laws, as responsible for the order of the universe.

³⁹ II 19: *uno divino et continuato spiritu contineretur*.

⁴⁰ II 32: *hominem qui esset mundi pars*.

⁴¹ This view is reflected in Chrysippus' contention that though humans obtain the top rank on the *scala naturae* because contemplation of the world is his natural task, *ad mundum contemplandum et imitandum*, humans are not perfect, but only fragments of that which is perfect, 37.

Such seems to be the gist of their comparison of the world with a well-built house that accommodates all sorts of inhabitants.⁴² So the same type of argument a fortiori — that characterises Plato's justification of providential care — seems to be at work here. Among the Stoics, Zeno especially emphasises the function of the world-mind (*mens mundi*) as an all-embracing providence whose main function is to secure the wellbeing of the entire cosmos (II 58):

This providence is chiefly directed and concentrated upon three objects, namely to secure for the world, first, the structure best fitted for survival; next, absolute completeness; but chiefly commensurate beauty and embellishment of every kind.

In his justification Zeno largely focuses on the heavenly bodies and their cooperation. When he acknowledges other divine beings they turn out to be divine gifts in the sense of natural products, such as wine or cereal. This view on nature's products was common to the three founding fathers of the Stoic school Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus. It explains their interpretation of the deities of Greek mythology (66): they represent the different elements in the universe, so that Jupiter is heaven, Juno is air, water is Neptune, earth is *Dis* or *Dives*, the element that is the origin and end of all living things. At the same time nature's forces are referred to in the attempt to demythologise the unseemly mythological tales about the gods.⁴³ The story of Kronos devouring his children, for instance, should be understood as allegorical speech about fleeting time consuming its own parts. Thus Stoic teaching discovers a grain of truth in even the most fanciful and sometimes absurdly anthropomorphic folk-tales by reinterpreting them in terms of their own natural philosophy. Though the Stoics repudiate the stories in their literal sense as anthropomorphic nonsense (II 70), they support the natural pantheistic presuppositions that they regard as the nucleus of these stories.

While the first two points of Cicero's discussion of the Stoic arguments (i.e. the proof of the existence of the gods and their nature) do not shed much light on the question of providence's working, the last two items, that the gods govern the world and care for the fortunes of mankind, are directly pertinent to our topic. It remains to be seen, however, whether the 'caring for the fortunes of mankind

⁴² Rackham relates this passage to *Timaeus* 89a, but the thought is actually closer to *Laws* 895c.

⁴³ II 64: *physica ratio non inelegans inclusa est in impiis fabulas*.

(*rebus humanis*)' adds anything to the benign governance of the world by nature. For once again, Balbus' general picture of a universal administration by the supreme principle, the *hegemonikon*, at first sight does not speak for the belief in special care taking for particular persons. For as he points out, the natural course of things may be impeded in particular cases, so that individuals may be prevented from achieving their natural goal (II 35): 'The various limited modes of being may encounter many obstacles to hinder their perfect realisation, but there can be nothing that can frustrate nature as a whole (*universam naturam*), since she embraces and contains within herself all modes of being.'⁴⁴ This seems to speak for a general rather than for a personal providential administration of the world by the divine mind in a way that reminds us, once again of Plato's account in the *Laws*. Human beings are treated as a small part of the world (II 37): 'He is by no means perfect, but he is a small fragment of that which is perfect.' But if the Stoic depiction of divine providence in general is in agreement with that of Plato's *Laws*, this cannot be the whole story. For the critics of Stoicism clearly went on the assumption the Stoic conception of providence extends much further than does Plato's; for they treat it as an all-encompassing determining force. For that reason Cicero's Epicurean pokes fun at their conception of providence by depicting it as a prying busybody. Though Balbus rejects the notion that divine providence should be treated as a personal deity in the way presupposed by the malicious critics, he tries hard to defend the belief in providential care.

The discussion of the third Stoic tenet, that the gods govern the world, gives a more detailed idea of how the Stoic concept of providence is to be understood (II 73 ff.). Providence is not a special deity, as Velleius assumes with his joke about the 'nosy old hag', but represents the joint effort of all divinities who contribute to the general order of things. As such providence is not a principle that transcends the world itself, but works as an immanent principle in all things, especially in those of the highest moment. It is not, however, a strictly unitary principle. For Chrysippus (or whoever is Cicero's ultimate authority at this point) depicts the world as a commonwealth guided by co-operating spirits. The gods are 'animate beings, and not only animate but possessed of reason and united together in a sort of social community or fellowship, ruling the one world as a

⁴⁴ This distinction is also emphasized by Plutarch in *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 1056d.

united commonwealth or state (78).’ Nor is this a mere metaphor: cosmic rationality is not only comparable to human reason, but the latter is even a derivative of the divine mind. This presupposition allows the Stoics to extrapolate from humans to the nature of the gods: they must — in principle — possess the same rational faculty as do humans and hence they have the same basic moral convictions as to right and wrong. The gods possess all that is good in humans, albeit to a higher perfection. Thus the argument proceeds from part to whole as well as from whole to part: whatever is good on a smaller scale must be vastly superior in the world as a whole; while all lower elements in our sphere must be derivatives from the superior kinds as such. Nature is therefore interpreted as a rational force and distinguished from the mere mechanical system that lacks reason, as the Epicurean theory assumes (81-82). Once again we seem to discover an echo of Plato’s conception of nature in the *Laws*. For the Stoics also identify nature with art in its highest perfection. They seem not to have seen any problem in the combination of monistic features (god as an all pervasive fire or *pneuma* respectively) and polytheistic assumptions (the different divinities of traditional religion). All so-called divinities can be interpreted as particular manifestations of the one divine element. There is then also nothing absurd in the attribution of a divine status to entities that were objects of cults in Rome, such as Ceres or Liber, Faith and Mind, and other such symbols of human wellbeing.

Since the Stoics conceive of their divine power as an all-pervasive *pneuma*, the main distinction between their position and Plato’s consists in the fact that Stoic providence is an immanent principle in all of nature. It is not confined to the divine souls of the heavenly bodies that somehow or other (Plato is silent as to the ways and means) also care about smaller matters. Instead, it works as the active principle that penetrates all parts of the universe. Hence the Stoics maintain a kind of ‘animism’ in nature as a whole. Since providential care is not restricted to the heavenly bodies Stoicism can truly treat the world as one living organism.⁴⁵ This is attested by the often repeated argument for an artful administration of nature as a whole: ‘either there is nothing that is ruled by a sentient nature or we must admit that the world is so ruled’ (85).⁴⁶ Thus the world is to be

⁴⁵ On *natura sentiens* cf. II 75; 78. Air is treated as *animalis* because breath sustains live organisms, 91.

⁴⁶ It is a closed system of mutual maintenance: earth nourishes the plants, the

conceived of as a self-administered organic unity. The whole is at one with its parts and forms a perfectly harmonised system that comprises all natural beings. In fact, in the discussion of the details the gods gradually disappear as agents and the question finally turns out to be how well human beings are taken care of by nature. Therefore the comparison of the world with a perfect clock is not far-fetched, a comparison which is used to justify the claim that providence is to be regarded as the *rector et moderator et architectus* of the whole (90).⁴⁷ The effects of providential care inspire Balbus to a rapturous description of the purposeful organisation of plant-life, as well as of the equipment of animals for nutrition, procreation and self-defence (120-130). The explanation of the overall divine government finds its culmination and conclusion in an appraisal of the singular fittingness of the human body (human anatomy, physiology, faculty of speech, upright position) and mind whose highest activity is the observation of the heavens and the worship of the gods, — features that elevate humans above other creatures (130-153).

Divine providence for humans does not stop with their natural equipment, according to the Stoics. As it turns out, the depiction of the natural endowment of humans constitutes only the preface to the fourth Stoic tenet that the gods care for the fortunes of humankind (154-167): 'It remains for me to show, in coming finally to a conclusion, that all the things in the world which men employ have been created and provided for the sake of men.' But readers who expect a discussion of special provisions for the various twists and turns in the life of an individual will be disappointed. Once again the Stoics confine themselves to a discussion of the beneficial effects of the world-order on human life as such, a depiction that focuses largely on the explication of teleology in nature quite generally. Therefore to some extent, Balbus' argument covers the same ground, as did the discussion of the divine governance of the world at large. If special emphasis is put here on the aspect of how the teleological principle in nature makes the world and everything in it suitable for the

animals are maintained by the air, which also enables sentient creatures to see and hear. This system also comprises the cyclical change of the four elements into one another, that is either eternal or takes immeasurably long periods of time, II 82-3 (an extension that may be due to the influence of Panaetius on Posidonius).

⁴⁷ The praise of the purposefulness of nature of the universe as a whole and of the beauty and regularity of the stellar constellations gives Cicero the opportunity to include long citations from his own translation of Aratus' *Phaenomena* (*N. D.* II 93-118).

wellbeing of human beings,⁴⁸ they are not the only beneficiaries. They share that privilege with the gods (154): 'In the first place the world itself was created for the sake of gods and men, and the things that it contains were provided and contrived for the enjoyment of men.' In this connection Cicero calls the world the 'common dwelling house of gods and men or the city common to both'.⁴⁹ This seems to be a correction of Balbus' earlier assertion that humans are but lowly inhabitants of the 'house of the world'; comparable to weasels and mice, while the gods are its rightful owners. But the seeming contradiction is explained by the fact that, while the first comparison of the world with a house occurs in the proof of the existence of the gods, now the concern is to prove providential care for humans. That the metaphor of the house is now extended to make humans the co-inhabitants with the gods illuminates the fact that humans possess the ability to live by justice and law. These higher abilities constitute their claim to appropriate nature's goods for their own benefit. This principle of appropriation includes even the 'use' of the stars. For though the cosmic purpose of the heavenly bodies is the preservation of the whole system, they also have the special function to provide humans with an awe-inspiring spectacle (155):

[F]or there is no sight of which it is more impossible to grow weary, none more beautiful nor displaying a more surpassing wisdom and skill; for by measuring the courses of the stars we know when the seasons will come round, and when their variations and changes will occur; and if these things are known to men alone, they must be judged to have been created for the sake of men.

This leaves us with the question why the Stoics are so confident that the world as a whole is a kind of teleological system that is geared to the benefit of humankind. Balbus justifies his optimism with the simple argument that nothing comes about by chance but everything has a use and purpose, and that therefore the intelligent user is entitled to benefit from that use. He provides further support for this claim by comparing the world with a fruit-garden arranged for some purpose and use. Since the irrational beasts are incapable of making proper use of nature's products and the gods don't need them, they must be created to serve human needs (156):

⁴⁸ If Plutarch *Stoic rep.* 1044d is to be trusted Chrysippus explained even the existence of bed-bugs and mice as means of moral improvement in human beings.

⁴⁹ II 154: *quasi communis deorum atque hominum domus, aut urbs utrorumque*. The metaphor of the world as a *house* also occurs in *Div.* I 131.

In fact the beasts of the field are entirely ignorant of the arts of sowing and cultivating, and of reaping and gathering the fruits of the earth in due season and storing them in garners; all these products are both enjoyed and tended by men.

The Stoic conviction that most things in nature serve a purpose is not just based on experience, though experience is an important factor. It is also based on the most fundamental metaphysical principle in Stoicism: that the world is ruled by a divine *logos*. This *logos* is treated not just as a law of strict regularity but also as a principle of co-ordination. And co-ordination properly so called cannot be a matter of coincidence but implies a definite purpose. The highest and most rational 'use' of nature's products is then the real end and purpose they serve. The thought that in nature each species and every living being equally strives for its own preservation clearly does not occur to the Stoics, just as it did not occur to Aristotle. Though they express admiration for nature's economy in equipping the animals for survival (121-130), they did not consider the possibility that 'each species is directly related to God', as Ranke might have said in an adjustment of his postulate that each human generation has a claim to autonomy in history.

Does the Stoic conception of providence, then, represent anthropocentrism at its worst? That would be too simple a conclusion. It seems rather that the Stoics interpreted the idea of natural teleology in a quite literal sense, while we usually treat it only as a metaphor. If there is a universal co-ordination and purpose in nature, there must also be a beneficiary, and that can be none other than the creature capable of making most intelligent use of nature's products, namely human beings. The justification for the subjection of the animals to the benefit of humans is that humans, but not animals, put their products to the highest, most artful use: without human beings, the sheep's wool would be wasted, just as the dog's watchfulness would not find its most rational application. The Stoics were quite creative in the discovery of 'purposes' for each and every kind of plant and animal, as their claim shows that the pig's soul acts as a kind of preservative, like salt, to prevent it from rotting. Birds are not just created for human consumption but also serve as omens, and the big beasts that are hunted in the forest provide much needed warlike exercise. Hence the whole earth looks like a storehouse of commodities set up for human use. This scheme of general usefulness includes also the signs of divination that the Stoics accept as part of the nature of things (163):

Many observations are made by those who inspect the victims of sacrifices, many events are foreseen by augurs or revealed in oracles and prophecies, dreams and portents, a knowledge of which has often led to the acquisition of many things gratifying men's wishes and requirements, and also to the avoidance of many dangers. This power or art or instinct therefore has clearly been bestowed by the immortal gods on man, and on no other creature, for the ascertainment of future events.

However we may judge this interpretation of nature's economy in the service of mankind, it is clear that the anthropocentrism of the alleged natural provisions for human wellbeing far exceeds that of Plato. For the Stoics the world is not just, as it is for Plato, a well-built house, ready for human inhabitants. Their 'house of nature' is also fully furnished and well stocked for daily use. This stock even includes warning-signs for those who care to read them. While Plato bases his account of providential care on the general postulate that the gods cannot neglect the interior of the world because it is their property, the Stoics extend their account to a detailed proof of the finesse of nature's provisions. Their theory does not leave the kind of gap between heaven and earth that Plato carefully wants to preserve in the *Laws*.

But however admirably fine-tuned these provisions in nature may appear in the Stoic conception, this providential system is confined entirely to the general conditions of nature, as Cotta, the Academic spokesman, is going to object in his reply. Though these conditions may be admirable, there is no reason to attribute them to a conscious divine mind (III 28):

On the contrary, the system's coherence and persistence is due to nature's forces and not to divine power; she does not possess that 'concord' of which you spoke, but the greater this is as a spontaneous growth, the less possible is it to suppose that it was created by the divine reason.

That human beings are nature's main beneficiaries is due to the fact that nature is a provider of opportunities. Thus 'providence' merely spreads out nature's goods for everyone capable of making them serviceable for some purpose or other. But this concentration on nature as the agent of providence seems to rule out any further-reaching individual care for human beings by divine powers. In fact, the providential administration by nature makes it quite unlikely that there is a further-reaching scheme of providence. For each individual appears to be quite free as to whether and what use he/she is going

to make of nature's bounty. The goods of providence turn out to be no more than nature's provisions.⁵⁰

4. *Providence and Individual Fate*

It remains to be seen whether this interpretation does justice to the Stoic doctrine of divine providence. For though there is strong evidence for a 'naturalisation' of that conception in Balbus' defence of Stoicism, there are, nevertheless, sufficient indications that the Stoics were not content with a simple fusion of providence and nature as the benign provider of opportunities for those who are able to exploit them. For in his concluding chapters of the second book, Balbus indicates that providence is not limited to such a role, but also aims at the wellbeing of individual persons (164-167). This would suggest that the Stoic 'house of providence' — to stick to that metaphor a little longer — is not just a house well built, well furnished and stocked, but also an 'intelligent house' of the kind that enjoys a certain popularity in America nowadays. In such a house, everything is computer-programmed for the owners' personal comfort, the thermostat as well as the equipment in the kitchen, or the preparation of a bath at the appropriate time and at the right temperature. Does Balbus really want to suggest that providence arranges the individual's life in such a way? The comparison of providence with a divine computer-programme is in a way correct and in a way not. For the text shows that the step from general to personal providence was regarded as at least problematic. For Balbus justifies the extension not with examples for the beneficial care-taking of individuals, but with an abstract 'a fortiori' argument from the general to the particular (164):

Nor is the care and providence of the immortal gods bestowed only upon the human race in its entirety, but it is also wont to be extended to individuals. We may narrow down the entirety of the human race and bring it gradually down to smaller and smaller groups, and finally to single individuals.

Though this pattern of reasoning seems to have enjoyed certain popularity among the early Stoics quite generally, these a fortiori

⁵⁰ Chrysippus seems to acknowledge this fact when he explains negative effects in nature such as illnesses as natural concomitants of natural benefits, cf. Gellius *Noctes Atticae* VII 1; Plut. *Stoic rep.* 1051b-c.

arguments are usually employed to provide justifications that are otherwise hard to come by. This is clearly the case here, where the narrowing-down proceeds ‘geographically’, so to speak (165):

If they care for those who inhabit that sort of vast island which we call the round earth, they also care for those who occupy the divisions of that island, Europe, Asia and Africa. Therefore they also cherish the divisions of those divisions, for instance Rome, Athens, Sparta and Rhodes; and they cherish the individual citizens of those cities regarded separately from the whole body, for example, Curius, Fabricius and Coruncianus in the war with Pyrrhus, Calatinus, Duellius, Metellus and Lutatius in the First Punic War [...].

This ‘proof’ is clearly no more than a formal inference, and a dubious one at that, which tells us nothing at all about how providence tailors its care for individuals.⁵¹ Cicero himself does not seem to put much trust in its force, for he treats it in quite a perfunctory way. In what follows, he contents himself with an enumeration of a list of famous names from Roman and Greek history to show that there are mortals who enjoy the special protection of the gods. But this enumeration is very brief and superficial, and it refrains from any attempt to explain on what principles this type of providential care works — beyond the assertion that its beneficiaries are somehow special persons. Moreover, Balbus hastens to add that individual care does not extend to small things like the ruin of a field or a vineyard by a storm. He even denies that the gods care for such things at all (167):

The gods attend to great matters; they neglect small ones (*magna di curant, parva neglegunt*). Now great men always prosper in all their affairs, assuming that the teachers of our school and Socrates, the prince of philosophy, have satisfactorily discoursed upon the bounteous abundance of wealth that virtue bestows.

Apart from this summary claim, the question of how providence works in the case of individuals is not pursued any further, for with this pronouncement Balbus concludes his presentation of Stoic theology.

⁵¹ That the Stoics did believe in personal providence is, of course, attested by their support of divination. But, once again, their explanations hardly go beyond an affirmation of its existence (cf. *Div.* I 82). In *Div.* the Stoic position varies: they maintain that signs and portents are not sent individually but follow established patterns in nature (I 118), a claim much ridiculed in Cicero’s own response (II 35–39).

What are we to make of these all too brief indications? The claim that the gods scorn small matters as well as the reference to the wisdom of Socrates do not really support the image of the 'intelligent house' as an interpretation of personal providence. It is human virtue that guarantees success and happiness. In fact, in the question of 'small matters' the Stoics seem to grant less power to providence than does Plato when he rejects the view in the *Laws* that the gods neglect small matters in favour of big issues, — though we do not know how 'small' the matters may be that are deemed worthy of divine attention, for Plato is quite silent on that issue.

That the Stoics did lay claim to a detailed providential care, however, is confirmed by Balbus in his defence of individual benefits to mortals from the gods against Cotta's assault at the beginning of the third book. This sceptical criticism deserves special attention because it is important to see what the Academics regarded as the main weakness in Stoic theology. The gist of Cotta's criticism is that the wedding of theology and physics that is typical for the Stoics is detrimental to both religion and natural philosophy. Religion does not fare well because the Stoic divinities, in spite of all attempts to 'personalise' them, remain highly abstract beings — far too abstract for the taste of a religious Roman who will be quite unprepared to identify Jupiter with the 'heavenly vault' when he pays his respects to Jupiter's statue in the temple on the Capitol (III 11). In addition Cotta rejects the notion of personal divine apparitions and direct interferences as folklore that is not worth serious consideration. He heaps ridicule on the Stoic efforts to give rational interpretations of the various myths. He also severely censors the anthropomorphic depiction of the divine forces: if they are divine they have neither use nor need for human virtues such as courage, justice, or self-control (35-39). In addition, he points out the futility of the attempt to 'physicalize' the disorderly crowd of divinities and divine powers that populate not only Greek but also foreign religions (39-60). If the Stoics believe in a *mens mundi*, they should reject all such stories (60):

These and similar fables have been culled from the ancient traditions of Greece; you are aware that we ought to combat them, so that religion may not be undermined. Your school however not merely do not refute them, but actually confirm them by interpreting their respective meanings.

The Stoic attempt to theologise physics is judged as equally ill considered (III 20 ff.). Neither the beauty nor the regularity of the

world as a whole suffice as proofs that the world is a conscious, let alone a wise being (18). Instead, Cotta insists on the difference between the natural and the divine: the world is not a house! Since he does not accept a divine mind as the origin of natural phenomena he also rejects the conception of craftsmanship in nature just as he rejects the notion of a 'craftsmanlike fire'. The absurdity of the deification of natural powers and phenomena is summed up in a parody on the Stoic sorites: If the sea as assigned to Neptune is a god, the same must hold for rivers and lakes, and hence any single bit of water must be divine as well (52).⁵²

Though it may well be that these parodies distort Stoic reasoning, this does not invalidate the sceptic's caricature completely. For a *reductio ad risibile* such as Carneades' would have been pointless had their opponents' position not invited such a *reductio*. What can have prompted the Stoics to expose themselves to such attacks? The answer is simple and shows at the same time the great difference between their conception of divine government and that of Plato. The point has been mentioned repeatedly in passing, but it has not received sufficient attention yet: the Stoics were true pantheists in the sense that they assume the presence of the divine rational element in all of nature. Hence for them the explanation of all natural phenomena as manifestations of the divine active principle down to the minutest items presents no problem. There is something divine even in a puddle. Likewise, their pantheist convictions allowed them to pick out grains of truth in folk-religion. They saw no reason to repudiate even absurd-sounding stories if they could be explained as allegories that served as a means of moral edification.

This defence of the Stoics does not imply that they went out of their way to accommodate the ordinary folk-beliefs as a kind of advertisement for their school: "Join the Stoics and you can make any old belief philosophically respectable." Nor is their motive for appropriating traditional lore to court favour with the more conservative part of society. Their motive is rather to interpret all such phenomena as manifestations of the divine *logos*, in spite of all the distortions of traditional folk-religion. Their sceptic opponents clearly thought that they thereby proved too much — and mercilessly exposed to ridicule the absurd-seeming consequences of that theory.

⁵² Zeno's predilection for syllogisms is mentioned already at II 20-22, cf. Schofield 1983.

This is the point of Cotta's enumerations of all the divinities he saw entailed by the Stoic theory. In the eyes of opponents who did not share the pantheistic presuppositions of the Stoics, their theory of the divinity of nature simply looked absurd: if everything is supposed to be divine, one may as well say that nothing is. This is indeed the message the Academic polemic against the Stoics means to convey. Therefore Cotta claims that the Stoics must assign divine status to any of the objects that had some kind of cult in Rome, such as Bad Luck, Salt, or Fever. But though these examples may strain Stoic theology, for a pantheist there is nothing absurd in the assumption of some 'divine' element in all natural phenomena, even if on occasion they turn out to be detrimental to human interests.

These pantheistic presuppositions inspire a different objection, however. For it seems as if the very unity of the administration of the world by an all-encompassing *pneuma* makes the claim of special provisions for particular persons otiose. For if everything is determined by a rational *series causarum*, what sense does it even make to speak of special care for individuals? That each individual fate is part of a pre-established pattern does not seem to leave any room for ad hoc interference by a divinity. Moreover, it makes the bad as much part of the divine ordinance as it does the good, as Cotta points out against the Stoics. Nor is it difficult for him to show that the overall balance is not necessarily positive; for virtue does not usually meet its just reward nor vice its punishment. If anything, indifference rules the universe (89). It is significant that Cotta criticises a point that Balbus had not touched at all. If Cicero follows his source fairly closely, then this lack of correspondence between defence and critique must be due to a conscious decision on Posidonius' side. In view of Carneades' trenchant critique he decided not to comment on this vulnerable aspect of the Stoic position.⁵³ This would explain why there are points of criticism in Cotta's speech that do not represent a reply to

⁵³ A comparison of the correspondence between the two books is not possible here (cf. Kleywegt 1961). But if Posidonius was Cicero's source in the second book and Carneades in the third book (in his 'stenographer' Clitomachus' report), then the second book in a sense is a response to the sceptic critique rather than the reverse. Because of a substantial lacuna in the text (cf. III 65) the sceptic's treatment of divine governance of the world cannot be compared with Balbus' claims. But Cotta's refutation of divine care for humans (66-93) by far exceeds Balbus' very brief statement (II 154-167). While Balbus expatiated on nature's bounty and the blessings of divination, Cotta protests against overall injustice and the dubiousness of the divine gift of reason to humans.

Balbus. It can certainly be no accident that the lack of correspondence between books two and three for the most part concern the question of individual providence.

Though we may nowadays share Cotta's scepticism concerning a benign order of the world, such a pessimistic evaluation is no proof that the Stoic conception of personal providence is internally incoherent. For their notion of providence identifies it with the general order of things; and as such it contains very detailed provisions for all possible situations. If the natural order is all-inclusive, its rules must also comprise rare or unique occurrences. Hence the universal order also regulates the *idiôs poion* that constitutes the individual at every moment.⁵⁴ As the Stoics see it, the constellation that determines a particular person's state at a given time and place may be unique in a particular world-cycle. But this does not preclude the singular state of affairs forming an integral part in the eternal world-order. In fact it explains why it must recur time and again in the sequence of world-cycles. If the divine *logos* consists of the entire corpus of rules, then it also includes the development of each individual. Hence a person with a certain internal makeup will act in predictable ways, though they vary with the circumstances. That is why the Stoics can assume individual providence for individual persons as part of nature's provisions. Divine providence does not improvise; it works in an established pattern. There is nothing that happens 'on the spot'; for whatever may happen is part of the most rational course of events. Nor is there someone out there watching over each of us, protecting us when we get in trouble or who is out to get us if we do mischief. If for the Stoics the 'script of nature' is fixed for eternity then providence is the unfolding of a fixed provision, even if it is fine-tuned to the degree that it includes every particular constellation.⁵⁵ This principle does not provide ready excuses for misbehaviour: If I act badly, I thereby both confirm and fortify the bad state in me. Since I am conscious of that fact, I can make a special effort to improve; though even that effort is part of the fixed pattern, it manifests that I am a person capable of such an effort. Providence has seen to all

⁵⁴ Cf. *SVF* II 126-131. This is not the place for a discussion of the sources that suggest this view nor of the compatibility of such a theory with free will.

⁵⁵ The sufficiency of such provisions is a major point in Cotta's counterattack (III 70: 'nobis a dis esse provisum'): The gods should have foreseen the misuse humans would make of their provisions if they are omniscient, esp. 78 ff. The Stoics would no doubt insist that the course of events is nevertheless the best, i.e. the most rational one. That applies even to the small print of the script of nature!

that. Given these considerations, it should be clear why the dog cannot get off its leash: all through its life it will be tied to one situation or another, and, whichever way it may turn, there is no escape from falling into one of providence's pre-established patterns.

If that is how individual providence works according to the Stoics, the question may be raised why Cicero does not sufficiently explain the deeper implications of their theory. If he avoids technicalities that would overtax the ordinary educated readers' comprehension he may be following Posidonius' example. But whatever amount of mitigation there may have been in Posidonius, Cicero himself had special reasons to keep the discussion within the confines of his Roman public's expectations since he wanted to raise general interest in philosophy. He therefore had to avoid the impression that philosophy is merely a specialist's concern. Explanations of notions like that of the ἰδίως ποιόν would not only have been cumbersome, but certainly not to the taste of Romans who expected no more than a general survey of the different philosophical theories on the nature of the gods and on their concern for the world. We should also remember, however, that Cicero's motivation was not just to comply with 'the market's demands' but to propagate issues that he saw as vital for the public's moral improvement.

Conclusions and Conjectures

The Stoic doctrine of divine providence presupposes that the course of events is rational and therefore the best one imaginable; as such, it also includes events that may happen only once in a world-cycle to one particular individual. This insight may suffice to reconcile strictly rationally minded persons to the actual course of events, provided that they possess sufficient trust in an overall positive balance in the universe. As we have seen, such faith in the cosmic order and its justice is common to Plato and the Stoics, though they have quite different notions as to precisely who 'runs the household of nature' and in what way and within what limits. While divine *oikonomia* in Plato works from a distance and indirectly, in Stoicism it does so directly and by immediate contact. This type of faith seems to have satisfied the religious needs of persons in later times as long as a certain optimism prevailed. But once deep pessimism about the general state of affairs set in, this kind of *consolatio philosophiae* could

give only cold comfort. It does not come as a surprise that Stoic and Platonist theory were superseded in the long run by a faith like Christianity's that does not treat the world-order as settled, but that promises, once again, a more intimate relationship to the deity and that leaves room for a certain amount of 'bargaining' with higher powers. Need for such direct reassurance must have become pressing once the old world-order was no longer stable but increasingly left everyone to his or her own devices. Once the maxim 'Sauve qui peut' reigns supreme there is a need for more direct contact with the deity and for faith in the interference by personal patron saints. In an age of anxiety, few people are consoled by the conviction that they are mere parts of an overall benign but abstract and unchangeable order of things. It may sound paradoxical, but must be accepted almost as a matter of course, that Christian religion in spite of its increasing contact with Greek philosophy very soon started to foster a religious attitude of give-and-take with the higher powers that the old philosophers had tried to discard as not only irrational, but also unworthy of both gods and humans.⁵⁶

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⁵⁶ The paper has benefited not only from the discussion at the Symposium at Lille itself but also from Susanne Bobzien's work as referee. She has been very generous with penetrating questions and practical advice that forced me to tidy up my arguments and to reconsider the philosophical issues in general. Thanks are also due to Jaap Mansfeld's trenchant critique.

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GOD AND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE IN SENECA'S *NATURAL QUESTIONS*

BRAD INWOOD¹

In his *Hymn to Zeus*, Cleanthes celebrates the supreme deity, whom the whole cosmos obeys (ll. 7-8), so great is the power of the thunderbolt he wields (9-11). The thunderbolt is the means by which Zeus makes straight the κοινὸς λόγος which penetrates and blends with everything (12-13). As a result, the world is a single coordinated whole (18-21). The moral implications of this order are not neglected (14-17, 22-31). As convention dictates, the hymn ends with a direct prayer for divine assistance (32-38):

But Zeus, giver of all, you of the dark clouds, of the blazing
thunderbolt,
save men from their baneful inexperience
and disperse it, Father, far from their souls; grant that they may
achieve
the insight relying on which you guide everything with justice,
so that we may requite you with honour for the honour you give us,
praising your works continually, as is fitting
for one who is mortal; for there is no greater prize, neither for
mortals
nor for gods, than to praise with justice the common law for ever.

Seneca, of course, knew Cleanthes' work (he alludes to him in the *De Otio* and *De Tranquillitate*, cites him in *De Beneficiis* V and VI, and in eight of the *Epistulae Morales*). He even followed the example of Cicero who translated Greek philosophical poetry into Latin verse (*Ep.* 107.10-11), choosing another hymn by Cleanthes to underscore his own argument for the cheerful acceptance of fate.

Father and master of the lofty heaven, lead
wherever you wish. I will not hesitate to obey;

¹ I want to thank Daryn Lehoux for his many helpful suggestions on an early version of this discussion. Margaret Graver was very generous with her help, both substantive and bibliographical, on the earlier and shorter version which I presented to the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy (*Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1999) 23-43). The participants at the Symposium in Lille provided once again both constructive criticism and encouragement. In particular, David Runia, Richard Sorabji, Emidio Spinelli, and Teun Tieleman were generous with written comments.

I am ready and eager. And if I am unwilling,
 I shall follow groaning, and be forced to do
 in my wickedness what I could have done as a good man.
 The fates lead the willing, drag the unwilling.

The themes of Cleanthes' hymns lie at the heart of Stoicism and help to flesh out the doctrine of Chrysippus that theology is the culmination of physics.² For Stoic physics is by no means the bloodless study of a merely physical (in our sense) world. Like every branch of philosophy, physics is intimately concerned with the place of human beings in the coordinated whole which is run by Zeus. This is familiar enough as a doctrine. But it will be helpful to allude to a summary by Arius Didymus preserved in Eusebius (*SVF* II 528). This account maintains that the cosmos is not just the σύστημα of heaven, earth, air, sea and the natural objects in them; it is also, and more significantly, a 'dwelling place for gods and men', a σύστημα of gods, men and the things which exist for their sake. As in a political order, there are leaders and followers: in the cosmos the gods lead and we humans are subordinate, although the κοινωνία is preserved through the fact that we and the gods have a share in λόγος, which is a law for (or by) nature. The theocentric nature of Stoic physics is further confirmed by the dramatic opening of this extract, which declares that, taken as a whole, together with its parts, the cosmos is properly called god.

Hence when we turn to Seneca's main effort in the area of Stoic physics, the *Natural Questions*, we really should not be expecting him to be detached from lofty questions of god and man.³ And indeed he is not. For the *Natural Questions* is permeated by a vigorous interest in god, man, their relationship to each other, and the way in which the puzzling phenomena of the natural world relate to human life. As one begins grappling with a work which is often dry and impenetrable, it is worth recalling the first thing Cleanthes prayed for at the end of his hymn: 'save men from their baneful inexperience/

² See *De Stoicorum Repugnantiis* 1035a, a direct quotation in which Chrysippus prefers the order: logic, ethics, physics and makes theology the culmination of physics. He shared this view with Cleanthes, if we may infer a judgement on importance from the order of the parts of philosophy listed at D.L. VII 41. But see also the views of Chrysippus on the order of teaching (D.L. VII 40): following Zeno he preferred the order logic, physics, ethics.

³ For what it is worth, Diogenes Laertius' brief summary of meteorological and astronomical topics at VII 151-5 is sandwiched between his account of δαίμονες who watch over human affairs and a treatment of the human soul.

and disperse it, Father, far from their souls'. ἀπειροσύνη, the failure to have and use experience of the natural world,⁴ is the evil most to be deprecated. As we shall see, throughout the *Natural Questions* Seneca works hard to bring together in a single treatment the themes of human and divine relations, the relationship of human beings to the natural world, and human inexperience or ignorance. I shall argue that the cure Seneca proposes for this baneful condition of man is the application of a critically rational approach to the understanding of the cosmos. But what makes the whole exercise a challenge is Seneca's bold — perhaps foolhardy — decision to focus on meteorology,⁵ the least promising aspect of natural philosophy.⁶ It is impossible to comprehend the effort Seneca poured into this massive work⁷ without recognizing the nature of his central concerns in the book. The attempt to bring such central issues of Stoicism to his readership by way of such an unpromising vehicle is the mark of a literary genius — or a man who thought himself one. Here, perhaps, is the intellectually proud Seneca whom Tacitus portrays,⁸ proposing with an overweening pride to pull off a massive literary and philosophical coup.⁹ He will, if he succeeds, put comets, earthquakes, and hailstones to work in justifying the ways of god to man.¹⁰

Yet Seneca evidently failed in his grand ambition. Consider this representative judgement. In the introduction to his 1974 Munich dissertation, Franz Peter Waiblinger¹¹ quotes Axelson's 1933

⁴ We should recall that Chrysippus defined the τέλος as living in accordance with experience (ἐμπειρία) of things which happen by nature (D.L. VII 87, Stobaeus, *Ecl.* II 76).

⁵ I reject the argument by Gross 1989 that the *Natural Questions* was originally meant by Seneca to be a complete cosmology — a suggestion which requires positing the loss of entire books without a trace.

⁶ Contrast the rather easier themes chosen by Cicero in *De natura deorum* II.

⁷ His longest unified work surviving, if one recognizes that the *Letters* are a kind of serial collection. The *De Beneficiis* too was at first a work in four books, with the last three added after the provisional completion of the work (see *Ben.* V 1.1 and *Ep.* 81.3).

⁸ *Annals* XIII 11, Griffin 1992, 7-8, 441-4.

⁹ Compare the view in Alfred Gercke *Seneca-Studien* (Leipzig 1895 = *Fleckeisens Jahrbücher für Classische Philologie* Supp. 22), 312, who seems to think that Seneca's response to the appeal of a literary challenge undermines the seriousness of the work.

¹⁰ In approaching this question I am of course presupposing that Seneca was accustomed to detaching the issues of theme and literary form, so that he could consciously choose to package his chosen themes in surprising or paradoxical forms. I believe that his corpus provides abundant evidence for such an hypothesis. Doubters should look again at the metaphor of *De Ira* II 1.1-2.

¹¹ Waiblinger 1977, 1.

assessment:¹² the *Natural Questions* is “das am wenigsten gelesene und geschätzte Werk ihres Autors”, the least read and the least appreciated work by Seneca.¹³ Despite intermittent attention from a number of hardy and imaginative scholars over the decades (including Gisela Stahl¹⁴, Gregor Maurach and Nikolaus Gross¹⁵) this has remained largely true even now.¹⁶ The recent work by Carmen Codoñer¹⁷ and a series of studies by Harry Hine have to some extent pushed the *Natural Questions* into clearer view; their work on the text of the *Natural Questions* and the intractable problem of reconstructing the order of books has perhaps made further progress possible. Indeed, without Hine’s new Teubner text¹⁸ and the combined arguments of Hine and Codoñer concerning the book order, it would seem hardly

¹² B. Axelsson *Senecastudien: Kritische Bemerkungen zu Senecas Naturales Quaestiones* Lund 1933, 1.

¹³ The German-speaking world has done better than we Anglophones, though, with the recent appearance of the bilingual edition of Brok (Brok 1995). Brok was, unfortunately, unable to take advantage of Hine’s 1996 Teubner text. He is also hampered to some extent by his hasty dismissal of Hine’s textual work (p. 3). See also the short section on the *Natural Questions* in Maurach 1991.

¹⁴ Stahl 1960 and Stahl 1964, reprinted in Maurach 1975 and Maurach 1965, reprinted in Maurach 1975.

¹⁵ Gross 1989 gives the most recent and thorough literature review and an exhaustive treatment of possible sources, structural problems, and thematic analysis. Much of this is inevitably speculative, but his discussion never fails to advance these traditional problems. From the point of view of this paper, though, his analysis is limited by his decision to retain the traditional problematic, which regards the principal thematic issue as the opposition between primarily ethical and primarily scientific aims. I will be arguing that epistemological themes need to be given equal or greater weight.

¹⁶ Throughout this paper I owe a significant debt to the analyses of Stahl 1960, 1964, Maurach 1965, Waiblinger 1977 and Gross 1989, as well as the essay by Hans Strohme ‘Beiträge zum Verständnis der *Naturales Quaestiones* Senecas’ (in *Latinität und alte Kirche* (Festschrift Hanslik) Wien-Köln-Graz 1977, 309-325= *Wiener Studien* Beiheft 8). Their interests in this rich work are different both from each other and from my own, and their discussions are still read with profit. None, however, has pursued what I take to be the central role of epistemological concerns in the *Natural Questions*, although Maurach’s emphasis on the judicial modes of thinking and argument comes closest (see esp. Maurach 1975, 316-22). In this paper I hope to complement rather than to displace their work. Brok 1995 appears to turn back the clock on the issue of the work’s character and purpose, reasserting the unsatisfactory view that it is best understood essentially as a set of *quaestiones* in the tradition of ‘scientific’ writing on meteorology (pp. 4-5), with the ethical significance to be found in the introductions and excursuses alone.

¹⁷ ‘La physique de Sénèque: ordonnance et structure des *Naturales Quaestiones*’ *ANRWII* 36.3, 1779-1822.

¹⁸ Hine 1996. Hine’s preface provides a quick and efficient entrée into the voluminous philological literature on the text and book order. His own work on the ordering of books, in my view, renders most of his predecessors’ work on the topic obsolete.

worth while to embark on serious thematic study of the *Natural Questions*.¹⁹ For Hine and Codoñer have argued independently on text-critical grounds for the view that the original order was rather: III, IVa, IVb, V, VI, VII, I, II,²⁰ and we must assume this order as a basis for exegesis of Seneca's position until new and better arguments come along.²¹

Understandable though it may be, the relative neglect of the *Natural Questions* is regrettable. For although Seneca's primary interest was certainly ethics and although (as Barnes has recently reiterated²²) his interest in logic was merely utilitarian, physics is not a marginal or merely subordinate branch of philosophy for Seneca. Not only is a knowledge of physics useful for moral improvement; it is also clearly the superior science in Seneca's eyes (*Nat.* I Pref.), just as it was for Chrysippus (*St. Rep.* 1035a-f; see n. 2 above). And for both philosophers, theology took pride of place within physics. Nor was Seneca's interest in physics restricted to just one period of his life: the *Natural Questions* is very likely from the latest stage of his career, but the lost work on earthquakes was certainly of early date and our fragments of and allusions to other lost books suggest a fair bit of

¹⁹ Stahl (1960 and 1964) and Waiblinger 1977 have both undertaken such studies, and both have integrated their interpretive proposals with arguments for the traditional ordering of the books (one–seven). Codoñer 1989 and Hine 1996 have shown, on largely text-critical grounds, that this cannot have been the original ordering of the books. It is worth noting that the preface of book one in the traditional order deals extensively with the themes which I will be arguing are in fact central to the work as a whole. So it would be satisfying if this could be taken as the original introduction to the whole book (as it is by Stahl and Waiblinger, followed by Maurach 1991, 146). Gigon 1991, 322 reverts to the hypothesis of A. Rehm 'Anlage und Buchfolge von Senecas *Naturales Quaestiones*', *Philologus* 66 (1907), 374–395.

²⁰ Hine 1996, xxiv, Codoñer 1989, 1792.

²¹ We are not compelled, however, to assume that the book order is critical to Seneca's argument, since it is possible that the work was organized as a series of essays on related themes and that there was little thematic progression — a pattern visible in the last three books of the *De Beneficiis*. Perhaps the fluid ordering of the *Letters* also illustrates the practice. (Brok 1995, 4 is firmly committed to this view of the work's ordering and construction.) Gross 1989 opts for a book order in the archetype which is incompatible with the findings of Hine and Codoñer, and concludes that not only is our treatise incomplete (that entire books are missing from our tradition) but that Seneca probably did not himself finish the book; this may well be true. I believe, though, that the treatise read in the order indicated does have a discernible thematic progression. After the preface to book three (the first book), which adumbrates many of the issues of interest, there is a decline in their apparent centrality followed by a strong crescendo towards the end of the final book (book two).

²² *Logic and the Imperial Stoa*, Leiden 1997, ch. 2.

composition on topics similar to the themes of the *Natural Questions*: not just earthquakes, but stones, fish, and the geography of India and Egypt.²³

Of course, herein lies the principal cause of this sad neglect. The physical themes of the *Natural Questions* are not always the grand cosmological topics which generally excite philosophical interest today²⁴ (these are seldom principal themes in Seneca's work, except perhaps for the *On Providence*, to the extent that we regard it as physical not ethical); nor are they the more 'metaphysical' aspects of Stoic physics which we see occasionally in the *Letters* (I think of letter 58 on 'being' and letter 65 on causes). The *Natural Questions* focuses instead on more particular phenomena of the natural world, themes traditionally relegated to 'meteorology'. Book one deals with the fiery phenomena of the heavens, book two with thunder and lightning, book three with water within the earth, book four(a) with the Nile, book four(b) with the causes of dew, frost, hail, snow and clouds, book five with the winds, books six and seven with earthquakes and comets respectively. The tradition of advancing speculative explanations for such phenomena goes back to the earliest Presocratic thinkers, was given a characteristically Epicurean treatment in the *Letter to Pythocles*, and had been given further currency by the Peripatetic school in the Hellenistic period. Within Stoicism Posidonius and his students earned the biggest reputation for such work, and a very great deal of the limited work on the *Natural Questions* has focused on situating Seneca with respect to his sources in this tradition.²⁵

We should not underestimate the importance of giving rational explanations of such phenomena in the ancient world, both for scientific reasons (reflected in the rich Peripatetic tradition) and for consolatory and ethical reasons (most evidently in the Epicurean

²³ On matters of dating, I follow Griffin 1992. For the lost work on earthquakes, see *Nat.* VI 4.2. See Griffin 1992, 46-7, 175, 399-400; see Brok 1995, 1-3.

²⁴ See the brief discussions by R.B. Todd and M. Lapidge in *ANRW* II.36.3, 1374-5 and 1397-1401.

²⁵ Gross 1989 gives the most recent and thorough treatment of the sources for the *Natural Questions*, as well as providing careful analysis of the literary structure of each book. In broad outline his account of the sources is plausible and helpful (he has rejected the 'one-source' models of many of his predecessors and sees how independently, even creatively at times, Seneca uses his sources). See also the remarks by Brok 1995, 7. More, I think, could be said about Seneca's reaction to his literary predecessors in Latin, particularly Lucretius and Ovid.

traditions).²⁶ But even in the ancient world (let alone in ours) this is not the kind of topic which consistently excites serious philosophical interest. Here in the *Natural Questions* more than any place else in the corpus Seneca seems to be caught between the rock of trivial tralatitancy themes and the hard place of belle-lettristic adornment. Add to this dilemma the chaotic state of the books (two of the eight are truncated and until recently there has been no usable consensus on their order), and the neglect ceases to surprise. My goal in this paper is to argue that the *Natural Questions* contains a good deal more which is of serious philosophical interest, that it contains an important strand of reflection on the relationship between god and man. This important theme is (as is often the case in Seneca) intermittently highlighted against the background of the overtly dominant topic.²⁷ I will argue, then, that Seneca presents his readers with the fruits of serious thought about the relationship between god and man, and would like to suggest (though proof is not possible) that Seneca's most important concern in the book as a whole is not the overt theme (explanations of traditionally problematic natural phenomena) but the subterranean theme of the relationship between god and man, and most particularly the epistemic limitations of human nature.²⁸ Seneca's interest in god goes beyond the role of god in Stoic cosmology and extends to more general reflections on the epistemological distance between divine and human nature.²⁹

²⁶ I want to thank participants at Lille (especially Richard Sorabji) and Margaret Graver (who commented on a shorter version of this paper at the Boston Area Colloquium at Boston College) for emphasizing the centrality of meteorological explanation to the project of rational reassurance in an often threatening world.

²⁷ This has been recognized to some extent by Stahl (1960, 1964) but is de-emphasized by Maurach 1965 (in Maurach 1975, 321 n. 62), who holds that since the physics of the *Natural Questions* is subordinate to large-scale cosmology (which he calls 'the physics of the sage') its theological contribution must be limited. I want to argue that it is only the overt theme of the work, meteorological topics, which is to any significant degree subordinate; the latent epistemological theme is, I hope to show, central to the *Natural Questions* and is just as important for Seneca's theological reflections as cosmology would be.

²⁸ In what follows I would not want to suggest that Seneca is breaking totally new ground. For as Teun Tieleman and Carlos Lévy remind me, Chrysippus was also very conscious of the need to refrain from hasty judgement when the evidence available on a problem is unsatisfactory. See, e.g., *SVF* II 763, 885, and his notorious but sensible advice on how to respond to a sorites argument, *SVF* II 276-277. See also D.L. VII 46. On Chrysippus' method, see T. Tieleman, *Galen and Chrysippus on the Soul*, Leiden 1996, part two.

²⁹ The direct epistemological interests of Seneca in this book have not excited much comment, but I hope to show that they are significant in extent and import. One scholar who does notice them, Pierluigi Donini (in Donini and Giancotti

Space and time do not allow for an exhaustive examination of the *Natural Questions* from the perspective which I propose. I hope that the selective analysis I offer will persuade; a careful rereading of the treatise as a whole will perhaps reassure the reader that I have not focused unfairly on passages favourable to my suggestions at the expense of potential counterevidence.

Let us begin by considering the preface to book three (and to the work as a whole). Seneca emphasizes the magnitude of the task he is undertaking, particularly daunting for someone already advanced in years. The challenge comes both from the global extent of the phenomena to be studied (*mundum circumire*) and from the fact that what is to be pursued are the hidden causes (*causas secretaque*) of nature as a whole. The difficulty is to make knowable to others (*aliis noscenda*) things which are both *sparsa* and *occulta*. The reward, of course, is that such efforts make the mind itself stronger (*crescit animus*). Seneca continues by emphasizing the relative unimportance of the tasks undertaken by historians. Just writing up the deeds of great men is of less importance than the moral instruction one can derive from philosophical reflection on them. It is god, after all, who determines how high or low one's fortunes may be. In III Pref.10 Seneca offers the explanation for our mistaken overestimation of historical greatness: it is because we are 'small' and 'low' (*parvi, humilitate*) that so many things seem great. The implication is that

1979, part 2, ch. 3), sees the epistemological interests of the *Natural Questions* as evidence of Platonic interests and a general eclecticism. To be sure, parts of the work do rely on a contrast between what can be learned by means of the soul or reason and what can be learned by way of the senses; but this in itself is hardly evidence of Platonism. The contrast between reason and the senses is both old and widespread in ancient philosophy. In this paper I cannot do justice to Donini's bold and intelligent reading of the *Natural Questions* (which I was only able to obtain thanks to the generous efforts of Margaret Graver). Olof Gigon 1991 remarks on Seneca's interest in the epistemological limitations of human beings and the connection of these limits with the offering of multiple explanations (e.g., 317). Gigon, however, denies that these themes can be of Stoic origin and connects them more with the influence of Cicero's Academic stance (318, 312) and the influence of Peripatetic and Epicurean models (320). Gigon's insistence that Cicero is a central influence on the *Natural Questions* is weakened by the fact that his philosophical works are not mentioned and that he must be postulated as a hidden influence (318, 335). (The one reference at *Nat.* II 56.1 is to the oppressive effect of his reputation for eloquence.) Gross 1989 also concludes that Seneca is interested in epistemological questions, but clearly regards this as subordinate to the primarily cosmological and theological aim of the work (330).

god is the one who sets the standard for what is really great and what is not, that it is only our human limitations of perspective which lead us astray about what is really important in human affairs (*praecipuum*): not the political and military deeds which expand the boundaries of the world, but to have seen the whole of things and conquered one's own failings. These generalizations are punctuated by two claims: that there is nothing mundane which we should yearn for, since whenever we turn away from our dealings with the divine to consider merely human affairs we are blinded and disoriented (rather like those reentering a Platonic cave);³⁰ and that our ability to withstand, even accept misfortune would be greatly enhanced by knowing that whatever happens does so *ex decreto dei*, that being miserable about mundane events is a kind of disloyalty to god. The piety woven into this blend of physical and ethical reflection is confirmed by III Pref.14, where purity of moral intention is described in terms of the prayers we offer to the gods (*puras ad caelum manus tollere*): moral improvement is something we can aim for not least because it is a game which we can win while no one else loses (*sine adversario optatur*).³¹

At the conclusion of this preface, Seneca underlines the interdependence of achieving an understanding of nature (including our human nature) and moral clarity. In III Pref.18 we learn how the pursuit of natural investigations serves this purpose:

For this purpose it will be beneficial to investigate the nature of things. First, we will escape the tawdry; second, we will withdraw our mind itself (which we need to have in its highest and best condition) from the body; third, our mental sharpness, if exercised on hidden matters, will be no worse in dealing with apparent matters; nothing, however, is more readily apparent than the salutary lessons we learn in our struggle against our vice and madness, things which we condemn but do not abandon.

The purposes envisaged do not include the satisfaction of intrinsic curiosity. Moral improvement would aptly describe the first two reasons, and the third might best be described as epistemic improvement (though the goal of that seems to be moral as well).³²

³⁰ I suspect that the allusion to Platonic themes is intentional on Seneca's part. But in my view this does not mean that Seneca is being strongly influenced by Platonism here.

³¹ Compare the theme of a competition in virtue in *Ben.* I 4, III 36, V 2.

³² III 1.1 (*quaeramus ergo*) suggests that these are also the reasons for studying more specific phenomena, such as the *terrestres aquae* of book three.

God is present throughout the preface, underlying the physical and the ethical themes. And so too are human limitations, the most pressing being the issue of our finite life-span with which Seneca opens the book; but our smallness of vision and inability to see into the heart of nature are also barriers, as are our radical dependency on god for our mundane fortunes and our weakness of resolution in the application of moral precepts. The study of nature is presented as *divinorum conversatio* (abandoning which leads to blindness) and moral weakness is apostasy (*desciscere*). The theological framework articulated here shapes Seneca's reflections on epistemology, on the study of physics, on ethics, and on the relationships among them. None of this is presented aggressively; but it cannot be missed.³³

The method Seneca displays in book three is typical of the treatise as a whole: problems are posed, various proposals for solution are canvassed, the views of earlier philosophers are scrutinized, and Seneca's own thoughtfully articulated arguments are mustered. A frank and open dialectical approach to the problem and previous views is omnipresent and he eschews arguments from Stoic authority. This aspect of Seneca's approach is well emphasized by Maurach in 'Zur Eigenart und Herkunft',³⁴ but one further feature of Seneca's method is worth a moment's reflection. In much of the *Natural Questions*, as in book three, the visible and puzzling phenomena of the world need to be explained in terms of things which we cannot directly observe. Ordinarily Seneca extrapolates in a reasonably empirical manner, holding that the unseen is probably much like what we see, since nature is orderly and uniform. For example, at III 16, when explaining 'why some springs are full for six hours then dry for six hours', Seneca prefers a general explanation for all such phenomena to a case-by-case approach. Thus he can give a single cause for them all. And the explanation he gives is surprisingly abstract, relying as it does on analogy with other orderly variations in nature (examples are quartan fever, recurrent attacks of gout,

³³ Seneca's interest in the human focus of natural philosophy comes out in another way which is worth a passing mention. As often in ancient natural philosophy (the *Timaeus* is a clear example), aspects of the natural world are explained by means of a close parallel with human beings. Throughout book three Seneca pursues the parallel of man and cosmos with some vigour.

³⁴ Maurach 1965 repr. in Maurach 1975. His essay brings out very effectively the argumentative character of the work, basing itself on a sample analysis of a part of book one. A reading of the whole work underscores how consistent and apparent this approach is — indeed, it is hard to fathom the neglect of Seneca's argumentative vigour in earlier scholarship. See most recently Gross 1989.

menstrual cycles, gestational periods, the seasons, equinoxes and solstices). Why shouldn't other phenomena, such as springs, follow such cycles? It would hardly be surprising given the pervasive orderliness of nature in pursuing its plans. Seneca suggests (III 16.2) that we have no trouble in observing cycles which are short in duration, but that we cannot so easily note the existence of longer cycles, though they are no less definite. With similar confidence Seneca postulates what he takes to be reliable *iura naturae* (III 16.4) under the earth (*crede infra quidquid vides supra*) and goes on to provide examples of subterranean phenomena which are similar to what we see — caves with air, earth, water and various forms of animal life (III 16.5).

Although this discussion of subterranean waters also forms the point of departure for the next theme (which resumes after the moralizing digression of III 17-18), the existence of fish in subterranean waters, it is offered in the first instance as proof that natural regularities license us to suppose that things happen in consistent patterns in the unseen world just as they do in the superficial world we see around us. This is offered as the general explanation for the regular pattern of activity in some springs. As feeble as such an explanatory strategy may seem to us, it is an eminently rational approach, and one which will seem more reasonable the longer one reflects on the limited amount of respectable evidence Seneca had at his disposal. Perhaps a permissive attitude towards possible causes, a kind of aetiological '*nil obstat*' based on analogy (rather like the Epicurean acceptance of multiple explanations in such matters) is not so foolish. Another indication of Seneca's healthy respect for the limitations of human explanation comes with his frank admission at III 25.11 that 'for some things a cause cannot be given'. The string of such phenomena concludes at III 26.8 with the frank acceptance that some things are very hard to account for, *utique ubi tempus eius rei de qua quaeritur inobservatum vel incertum est*. Without the appropriate evidence you cannot give a specific cause (*proxima .. et vicina ... causa*) but only a general and rather abstract explanation, based as before on very general patterns of regularity within a certain class of events. Seneca is very aware that it is our limited access to appropriate specific evidence which justifies the kind of abstract and therefore intrinsically less satisfactory explanation which he most often offers. Perhaps this is the best that humans can do, given that direct access to the workings of so much

of nature is denied to us. Perhaps this is part of what it means to live 'in accordance with an experience of things which occur by nature'.³⁵

Book three of the *Natural Questions* concludes with an extended discussion of the ultimate question concerning *aquae terrestres*, the pre-ordained flood which extinguishes human life on earth at the end of the cycle of change (the counterpart, it seems, of the conflagration). This is obviously not a topic for ordinary empirical investigation and explanation, like the nature and sources of rivers and lakes. But since the occurrence of such a cataclysm is a feature not just of folklore but also of Stoic natural philosophy, it must be explicable in terms of the theory used to account for other watery phenomena and so is included here. Moreover, this theme makes a splendidly apt conclusion to the book, since it provides an obvious moral application (the extinction of mankind in a flood is fitting in view of our moral corruption) and an ideal opportunity for consistent reassertion of the centrality to Stoic physics of the relationship of god (or nature) to man.

In the flood passage as a whole the anthropocentric nature of the deluge is prominent. At the beginning (III 27.1) the sea assaults *us* (*in nos pelagus surgat*); the flood has a purpose: *ad exitium humani generis*. The destruction of human settlements is highlighted: *villas*, *flocks* and their masters, *buildings*, *cities*, *walls* (III 27.7). It is a *clades gentium* (III 2.27), and after the natural landscape has been described (III 27.8-9) Seneca invokes again the human point of view (*omnia qua prospici potest*) and presents us with the image of the miserable remnants of humanity huddling on the few remaining bits of high ground, puzzled and confused as well as fearful (III 27.11-15). Seneca returns to the human perspective near the end of the narrative (III 29.5-9; III 30.7-8) underlining the moral purpose of this cleansing destruction.

But the main theme is causal: *how* can the world be overwhelmed by one element. Seneca has to work against the implausibility of such an event, which is inevitably beyond the experience of human observers. In an attempt to make such a unique event plausible he emphasizes, at the beginning and the end of the passage, the unimaginable power of nature: nothing is hard for nature (III 27.2; III 30.1): and this catastrophe is part of nature's plan from the

³⁵ D.L. VII 87, Stobaeus *Ecl.* II 76.

beginning (III 30.1: *utique <quae> a primo facere constituit; fatalis dies* III 27.1; *in finem sui properat* III 27.2; *illa necessitas temporis* III 27.3; *mutarique humanum genus placuit* III 28.1). Nature brings to bear the full range of watery causes (*omnis ratio consentiat* III 27.1; *multas simul fata causas movent* III 27.3). The power of nature is overwhelming when applied to the fragile nature of creatures. He reasons analogically again: just as the making of a human being or a city or a forest is a long and slow business but can after all be undone in a flash so too the earth as a whole is vulnerable to sudden inundation (III 27.2-3).

Seneca considers a range of explanations for the flood, starting with the views of Fabianus (III 27.4). But this explanatory material is set in the context of a moral and theological relationship. Fate's power over man, its ability to command the full resources of the natural world (the tides are described at III 28.4 as *fati ministerium*), and man's weakness and fragility in the face of divine or natural power (III 27.2-3) form the framework for the detailed explanations Seneca canvasses. But since in the end Seneca's view is that nature or god employs all possible causes in order to bring about the destruction of the human race by flood, the most important feature of the discussion is the polar opposition between divine power and human vulnerability.

And what are the causes? The first theories considered are unsurprising: rain (III 27.4-6) in amounts sufficient to undermine and weaken the foundations of everything (*nihil stabile est*), violent torrents from the hills (III 27.7), rivers rising far above their banks augmented by continued rain and even the rising levels of the sea (III 27.8-10). After a digression on the effects on human life of such causes (III 27.11-15) Seneca returns to his alleged *propositum*, the discussion of causal factors (III 28.1), and begins a debate (*sunt qui existimant, quibusdam placet*) which is typical of the ones he constructs in most of his detailed causal discussions. One party (III 28.1) denies the view Seneca has been developing and claims that excessive rain can endanger the land but not overwhelm it. Others (III 28.2) attribute the flooding to motions of the sea — presumably tidal disasters — holding that none of the causes considered so far can account for destruction on such a scale. Seneca is sympathetic to the combination of both sets of causes, since the lands must be overwhelmed and not just damaged. The effects of rain, streams and rivers are mere preludes to the marine upheavals which lead to the final and complete

inundation. This is reinforced by arguments that tidal floods can readily be understood as able to rise to the height of the land (III 28.3-5) and that observable variation in tidal activity is compatible with the postulate of such an unparalleled (*solutus legibus* III 28.7) tidal elevation. Indeed, this tidal hypothesis does violate the 'laws' of observed marine activity. How could this be, Seneca asks? 'By what rational principle (*qua ratione*) can one account for it?'

Just as the conflagration itself violates empirically grounded physical theories, so too does this postulate about marine activity. Seneca's strategy for explanation is based on a theological claim, the view that the *explanandum* is part of a divine plan (*cum deo visum est*) and is a divine decision (*quandoque placuere... placuit*). If that is the case, then, Seneca thinks, one can justify invoking explanations that go so far beyond what anyone has ever seen. Unprecedented rainfall (III 29.5 *plus umoris quam semper fuit*) and unparalleled high tides are complemented by other causes: earthquakes and the movements of the stars (III 29.1). Stellar activity is agreed to be part of the cause of the conflagration, and Seneca regards the inundation as its counterpart so it makes sense to accept such a cause there too. Hence Seneca accepts the validity of these causes and others extrapolated from the explanation of conflagration: it is part of the preordained growth cycle of the world to undergo flood just as it is to undergo fire (III 29.2-3).

All possible causes, then, are accepted as part of the explanation for the flood, which was a result of a decision of nature (III 29.4). The earth itself will contribute to its own demise (III 29.6-7). But the key point here is that the event is part of a law (*lex mundi*, III 29.3) like that which governs the variation of seasons and the growth and development of living things (III 29.2-3). But this natural law is presented as a decision too (*a primo facere constituit, decretum est* III 30.1), as part of a plan formed by nature so that at will she could attack us (III 29.3). Earth's vulnerability to destruction by water is the counterpart of our own bodily weakness (III 30.4) and is the proper reward for our moral failings (when greed prompts us to dig for buried wealth, we find water, the premonition of our punishment, III 30.3). The world is like our own bodies, kept sound only by constant diligence, and when that is relaxed destruction follows (III 30.5). But the destruction of the earth by water is part of a plan. Nature commands and permits it (III 30.6) and nature will again rein it in (III 30.7) when the time comes.

The opening book of the *Natural Questions*, then, sets the agenda for the treatise as a whole. Its overt theme is a set of problems and puzzles about a related group of natural phenomena. Seneca grapples with them by means of a carefully considered method,³⁶ one which rests on theological postulates but also gives considerable weight to a frank recognition of the limitations imposed on us by the fact that we are merely human observers. This recognition grounds both Seneca's readiness to employ controlled extrapolation from the observable to the unobserved and also his aetiological inclusiveness. Seneca wants to allow for all possible causes of the flood because there is no parallel in our experience for such an event being produced by a single cause and because we do not have grounds for ruling out any reasonable cause when the event is (from our limited point of view) unique and unobservable. As we should expect in a Stoic physical treatise, *Natural Questions* III weaves cosmology and theology together with divine purpose and plan, and there is an ambiguity between law and the decision of nature or god. Seneca does not even try to explain the natural world without intimate and indispensable reference to *our* position in it and god's role in governing it.

In books four(a) through five many of these issues seem to persist, although in a less concentrated form.

The truncated book four(a) does not give us much to compare with book three. There is certainly a strong moral motivation for the choice of subject matter: at IVa 1.1 Seneca explains to Lucilius that he has chosen to write about the Nile in order to draw his correspondent away from preoccupation with himself and the wonders of his own province. This motivation nicely reflects the lengthy preface on the evils of flattery and one's susceptibility to it (compare IVa Pref.20: *fugiendum ergo et in se recedendum, immo etiam a se recedendum* and IVa 1.1: *ut totum inde te abducam... in diversum cogitationes tuas abstraham*). The reason for drawing him away from his own province was clearly stated in the preface (IVa Pref.21): *ne forte magnam esse historiis fidem credas et placere tibi incipies quotiens cogitaveris: 'hanc ego habeo sub meo iure provinciam...'* Pride in his own rule would be as dangerous as the ambitious confusion between *procuratio* and *imperium* (IVa Pref.1); believing historians is equally risky (compare the remarks on what historians celebrate in III Pref.). But most of all,

³⁶ As we have seen (III 28), Seneca does not hesitate to create a debate where one is not strictly needed, in order to sharpen his case.

there is a kind of flattery to oneself in such pride. Hence the focus on the Nile, an Egyptian theme, while Lucilius is himself in Sicily. The message of this preface is that there is a serious moral drawback in believing what historians have to say about the importance of our affairs. To step back and consider them in the context of nature as a whole, or even in the context of some other part of the natural world, is morally salutary.³⁷ Natural philosophy, even of the more mundane kind, when practiced in a critical spirit, displaces history from its customary role as a source of moral improvement — but it does so because history is limited, even blinded, by its human perspective while natural philosophy goes beyond it.

But we do not in fact know how the moral motivation of the book played itself out in what followed, since so much of it is gone. The review of proposed explanations for the flooding of the Nile is lively and critical, and Seneca's intellectual poise is aptly reflected in his criticism of the philosophers in IVa 1. It is noteworthy that Seneca is here rejecting an argument from ignorance: earlier philosophers had thought that since the source was unknown and since the pattern of flooding was similar to the Danube, we should postulate similar causes for the Nile. Now this is a form of inference to which Seneca has no objection — it is not unlike his own method in book three, where he took it to be acceptable to postulate uniformities in cases where there was no specific discoverable evidence to the contrary. So it is not the form of the explanatory of the move which Seneca disapproves. His grounds for dissatisfaction are that by now the source of the Danube has been found in Germany, and without the ignorance and lack of evidence there is no justification for the general license to invoke unconfirmable analogies; and also that the pattern of flooding is not sufficiently similar to support the inference.

In IVb we lack any hint of the contents of the preface and must plunge into the middle of Seneca's account of hail. Given his methodological self-consciousness so far, it is probably not accidental that he is caught renouncing an overly bold plan: *grandinem hoc modo fieri si tibi adfirmavero quo apud nos glacies fit, gelata nube tota, nimis audacem rem fecero* (IVb 3.1). He seems to want to be counted a witness of secondary value, since he concedes that he does not have first-hand evidence (*qui vidisse quidem se negant*). Historians are again offered up as a contrast: *they* will offer one false claim after another

³⁷ Similarly in I Pref. Seneca reflects on the smallness of human affairs when compared to nature as a whole.

and then provide merely token indications of methodological care, when they disclaim *fides* and transfer responsibility to their sources. Seneca is, I think, being ironic when he offers Posidonius as a more trustworthy source on the subject of the formation of hail, since he is willing to *adfirmare* just as though he were a first-hand witness (*tamquam interfuerit*). That Posidonius' confidence is ill-founded is clear. Seneca, then, has positioned himself in contrast to both the historians and the distinguished Stoic Posidonius as one *auctor*, at least, who can be relied upon, since he does not claim to be authoritative where he cannot be due to his lack of first-hand observation. And of course the topic he is dealing with was not susceptible of first-hand observation by any human. The speculative nature of meteorological investigation seems to have weighed more heavily with Seneca than with other practitioners of the art.

At IVb 3.3 Seneca moves on to a topic about which he feels he can offer a theory, the shape of hail. For although the moment of formation of hail is hidden, analogical reasoning based on first-hand observation is possible: all other cases of moisture forming into droplets show that the condensate is globular. So too, then, for hail. At IVb 3.6 he invites direct comparison with Anaxagoras, claiming that as a philosopher he ought himself to have the same freedom to develop theories as did his famous predecessor. And this freedom to advance theories is further defended on pragmatic grounds at IVb 5.1. Seneca introduces a critique of a Stoic theory. He does not want to advance it (since it is so feeble); but neither does he want to leave it out. He reflects, then, *quid enim mali est aliquid et faciliori iudici scribere?* A strict criterion (*obrussa*) for arguments on such matters would lead to silence. The forensic metaphor continues: *pauca enim admodum sunt sine adversario; cetera, etsi vincunt, litigant*. Hence he feels justified in extending his account with a highly speculative theory. But he has carefully distinguished the risky nature of his own theory; we should recall that he had said at IVb 4.1 that he could justifiably cease his account but wanted to provide a full measure of satisfaction to Lucilius. This unconfirmed theory (IVb 5.3) is worth floating for a relaxed and indulgent critic ready to tolerate *molestia* (IVb 4.1).

But what it leads to is genuinely strange theorizing. In IVb 6-7 Stoic silliness (*ineptiae*) is pilloried. There are people who think that hail can be predicted and that it is a form of divination which can be the basis for propitiatory sacrifices. Evidently some members of his own school had tried to justify such antiquated and superstitious

religious practices, but for Seneca this is nothing but laughable nonsense, the sort of thing which you don't need to be a philosopher to reject out of hand. The inclusion of this nugatory point about hail is puzzling, I think, unless we recognize it as a foil. Seneca is self-consciously presenting himself as a thoughtful and methodologically careful author, unlike so many even of his own school. Of course, this also foreshadows the discussion of Etruscan augury in book two and reminds us again that divine-human relations are never far from Seneca's mind in the *Natural Questions*.

The remaining material in IVb can be handled briefly. Various speculations about whether snow forms high or low in the atmosphere are highlighted by Seneca's reaction to the notion (IVb 11) that mountain peaks must be warmer since they are closer to the sun. He rejects this because, he maintains, that on the relevant scale such mountains are not in fact 'high'. As he maintained in the discussion of the flood (III 28), on the cosmic scale the minor variations on the earth's surface, such as valleys and mountains, are not of significant size. What seems so impressive from the human perspective is in fact of no cosmic relevance.³⁸ There is, Seneca seems to think, an arrogance in judging the cosmic relationships relevant to explanations of this sort by merely human standards. Anyone, he says, who believes that lofty mountains get warmer because they are higher might just as well hold that tall people get warmer than short people and that our heads get warmer than our feet (IVb 11.4). Such ridicule underlines Seneca's conviction that mistakes of perspective about the scale and relevance of human beings and our concerns lead not just to moral flaws but to bad explanatory science.³⁹

Book five, on winds, lacks a preface to orient the reader. The book opens with a short controversy about the proper definition (*formula*) of 'wind' (V 1) and then plunges immediately into a critical consideration of different theories, beginning with Democritus. Most of this proceeds unremarkably after the pattern set in books three–four(b).⁴⁰ Seneca's own view is that air, like other elements, contains a life force within itself and so winds are examples of self-motion (V

³⁸ Cf. I Pref.9–11 for this point with an explicit anchoring of it in the contrast of the human and the divine spheres.

³⁹ The balance of IVb is a moral excursus linked to the use of snow to cool wine.

⁴⁰ But V 4.2–3 contains a not-to-be-missed rejection of the view that winds have their origin in digestive gases produced by the world animal.

5-6). When we turn to more detailed discussion of particular winds (including whirlwinds in V 13), if there is any particular theme to the critiques offered of various views it would have to be that they all too often involve incomplete generalizations and rest on factual errors. In V 14 Seneca again (as in book three) relies heavily on the postulation of features in the unobserved caverns beneath the earth similar to those we can note in our world of observed phenomena. In V 14.2 he argues for license to make this postulate by saying: *nam ne haec quidem supra terras, quia videntur, sunt, sed quia sunt videntur; illic quoque nihilo minus ob id sunt quod non videntur flumina*. Hence he can postulate subterranean phenomena to explain the winds which take their origin in the earth. And, he says (V 14.3), *quae si ita sunt, necesse est et illud*. That is, he uses this kind of postulate as a crucial support for further argument. The book is rounded out (after a brief digressive story in V 15) by a discussion of the classification of winds by direction and location (V 16-17) and concluded (V 18) by an expansive description of the providential nature of winds and our all too human tendency to abuse this divine gift. Seneca insists (V 18.13) that we cannot legitimately complain about the god who made us, if it is we who have spoiled his generous gifts. One of the driest discussions in the entire *Natural Questions* is brought back to Seneca's general purpose with this conclusion. For it confirms again that the relationship between god and man and the moral standing which men have as a result of how they react to god and/or nature are issues which lie at the heart of the *Natural Questions*.

The remaining four books represent a crescendo of concentration on these themes.

Book six deals with the causes of earthquakes. It approaches the topic with an urgency provoked by the recent occurrence of a major earthquake in Campania, probably in February of A.D. 62, at a time of year when (as Seneca notes) such disasters were least expected. After surveying the scope of the damage (VI 1.1-3) Seneca sets out the motivation for the consideration of earthquakes. It is not just the orderly progression of his work (*propositi operis contextus* VI 1.3) but also the need to provide consolation and remedy for the fears people understandably feel after such a disaster (VI 1.4). He paints a vivid picture of the particular fear inspired in men by earthquakes. The earth is supposed to be the most stable and reliable part of our world. If it crumbles, what can be trusted? Earthquakes leave the victims no place to run, so comprehensive is the disaster (VI 1.4-7).

The consolation Seneca offers begins from the fact that *some people* at least think of earthquakes as a particularly horrible way to die (VI 1.8). To this the response is simple. Nature is just, and one central feature of its justice is that all forms of death have the same outcome: *cum ad exitum ventum est, omnes in aequo sumus*. Seneca's claim is that the kind of vulnerability which seismophobes feel is quite unreasonable. Such vulnerability is actually universal, part of the bargain we accept when we live on this earth (VI 1.9-15). Earthquakes cannot be prevented or predicted; no one promises us stability (VI 1.10). So everyone, not just Campanians, lives with the risk. Just as the earth is subject to the same law of vulnerability (*eadem lege* VI 1.12), so too human beings and our cities are by nature short-lived and perishable servants of fate (VI 1.14). If our experience suggests grounds for confidence, that suggestion is deceptive. Although some regions might seem relatively immune from risk (VI 1.13), none really is. Yet on the basis of our experience, limited as it is, we humans promise ourselves stability and permanence. Knowing what the rules of the game really are (a knowledge which comes from the study of physics) would humble those who precipitately entrust themselves to confidence, only to fall victims when the unexpected occurs.

But this, as Seneca well knows, is a peculiar comfort. Where (one might wonder) is the remedy in being told that dangers are actually more widespread than we might have thought (VI 2.1)?⁴¹ The answer to his own rhetorical question is critical to understanding the *Natural Questions* as a whole. Seneca recognizes a dual audience: *prudentes* will be freed from fear by the use of reason, and the *imperiti*, those not trained in philosophy, will find comfort in the abandonment of (false) hopes. It is not just that earthquakes can occur anywhere; the prospect of death is omnipresent in the most trivial causes, and the uniformity of the outcome makes the means irrelevant; Seneca concludes with the consoling thought (tinged with his usual irony) that in a way earthquake victims are special favourites of nature: *quid habeo quod querar si rerum natura me non vult iacere ignobili leto, si mihi inicit sui partem* (VI 2.2-9).

⁴¹ Of course, the notion that such a reflection is supposed to console a rational person is the core of Stoic (and other) consolatory rhetoric. Seneca is, I suspect, aware that this consideration will provide cold comfort to many. Chrysippus himself was sensitive to the rhetorical and psychological demands of the consolatory process, if I am right in interpretation of *Tusculan Disputations* III 74-79 (see B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, Oxford 1985, 153-4).

But the *prudentes* do not have to settle for this rhetorical consolation. They can grasp the causes of things. In a sentence reminiscent of Epicurean rationalism, aimed at religious sentiments prevalent among his audience,⁴² Seneca points out that it is beneficial to be aware that earthquakes and similar phenomena are not caused by individual gods and divine anger (VI 3.1): *suas ista causas habent, nec ex imperio saeviunt sed quibusdam vitiis ut corpora nostra turbantur et tunc cum facere videntur iniuriam accipiunt*. It is our ignorance of these natural causes (*nobis ignorantibus verum*), coupled with the rarity of the phenomena, which causes fear (VI 3.2). The rarity of the events is important, since (like naïve empiricists) people are less strongly affected by anything which is a familiar part of their experience.

This is the occasion for one of Seneca's most important methodological reflections. Asking *quare autem quicquam nobis insolitum est* he replies that the error comes from reliance on our eyes rather than our reason: we rely on experience rather than analysis of nature (*nec cogitamus quid illa facere possit sed tantum quid fecerit*). The penalty for this mental laziness is the very irrational fear which Seneca proposes to combat by analysing the causes of earthquakes. Rare events (earthquakes, eclipses, comets) inspire superstitious reactions (*religio*) both public and private, and our astonishment is mixed with fear (*nihil horum sine timore miramur* VI 3.4).

We need to go beyond naïve reliance on our observational experience if we are to rise above our fear of natural events. Is it not worth while to *know* the causes of things, if the reward is freedom from fear? Such an investigation demands complete focus (*toto in hoc intentum animo*); it is not just a sensible course of action for men, but also the most fitting and worthy task (*nec quicquam dignius*) for us as rational animals (VI 3.4). That is why, Seneca says (*ergo* VI 4.1), he urges the enquiry on his readers. He begins by describing the phenomena in a way designed to make the enquiry intellectually engaging, one which is worthy of our attention (*dignas res* VI 4.1). At an imaginary challenge from Lucilius (*quod erit pretium operae?* VI 4.2) Seneca completes the shift from offering an emotionally utilitarian justification for the enquiry (as he did at the beginning) to the claim that the topic is intrinsically worth while: the reward is *quo nullum maius est, nosse naturam*. *Neque enim quicquam habet in se huius materiae tractatio pulchrius, cum multa habeat futura usui, quam quod hominem magnificentia*

⁴² Pliny *NH* II 200 reports the widespread view that earthquakes served as warnings of future events.

sui detinet, nec mercede sed miraculo colitur. We are, as Aristotle knew, creatures who by nature desire to understand things, inspired deeply by a sense of wonder at natural phenomena, and Seneca here acknowledges that as the overriding motivation. To live according to our experience of what happens by nature is our goal not just because it helps to free us from fear, but also because we are naturally contemplative creatures, fellow-citizens of the gods in the cosmic state and born to contemplate as well as to imitate the cosmos, being imperfect parts of the whole.⁴³

As a piece of persuasive writing, this introduction is quite successful. Having begun with the charged issue of recent disaster and the natural human panic it inspires, Seneca moves smoothly through a gamut of emotional and intellectual stages (including his disdain for shallow reliance on *mere* experience as opposed to causal analysis) until the deepest motivation is unveiled (one which clearly goes well beyond the motivations adduced in the preface to book three). Now he can begin (VI 5), and he does so with a critical review of previous and unsatisfactory theories; but although he is frank about the failings of primitive explanations, he confesses a deep respect (reminiscent of Aristotle's) for those who opened up the field of natural enquiry (VI 5.1-3). Simply forming the ambition to investigate was the critical achievement; such starting points are naturally crude by the standards of their successors. It is worth noting how Seneca describes their endeavours: they were not content with the *exterior aspectus* of nature, but opened up her hiding places and plunged into the *deorum secreta*. In contrast to the superstitious attention to gods which natural phenomena normally evoke, Seneca equates nature and the gods. These are rational gods whose 'worship' requires that we use the methods of rational investigation to go deep beneath the surface world of our ordinary observational experience.

In his review of theories Seneca begins (VI 6-9) with those which rely on water as the explanation. Most such theories, especially Thales', are unsatisfactory, but Seneca is favourably impressed by those which rely on subterranean rivers and lakes (one of several unremarked backward references to earlier books). In the course of developing this view he pauses to justify once again his postulate⁴⁴

⁴³ Cicero ND II 37: *ipse autem homo ortus est ad mundum contemplandum et imitandum, nullo modo perfectus sed est quaedam particula perfecti*.

⁴⁴ VI 7.5. Hine marks this as the speech of an interlocutor, but I cannot understand why. Gercke in his 1907 Teubner, Oltramare in the Budé and Corcoran

that there are massive underground bodies of water, and a familiar theme returns. People who deny such waters are naïve empiricists, trusting too much to their eyes and unwilling to project intellectually from the seen world to the hidden world beneath the earth. There follows a series (extending to VI 8.5) of abstract and empirical arguments for at least the possibility of the postulate.

After dealing with water as a cause, Seneca turns to the other two elements which are candidates: fire (VI 9-11) and air (VI 12 ff.), in each case reviewing earlier theories with a critical sympathy. He takes special interest (VI 14) in a theory which exploits the parallel between the earth and the human body.⁴⁵ In VI 16.1 he pauses on a distinctively Stoic theory (though he does not describe it as such) which invokes the creative *pneuma* in all things including the apparently inert earth. At VI 16.2 he turns to more powerful arguments in favour of assigning a key causal role to air. He argues first for the existence of a vast quantity of air (VI 16.2-4) and for its intrinsically restless and mobile nature (VI 16.4- VI 17.1). It is only when this natural motility is impeded, Seneca claims, that it shakes and disrupts the earth (VI 17.1- VI 18.5). This theory is given support (perhaps dubious support) by a further comparison of the earth to the human body (VI 18.6-7). Seneca concludes his survey of theories based on air with a scrupulous mention of Metrodorus (VI 19).

In VI 20 Seneca digresses to consider two theorists who combine various elemental causes, Democritus and Epicurus. Epicurus' theory of multiple causation is mentioned without disapproval, and it is striking that Seneca's own explicit acceptance of air as the dominant cause is presented as an agreement with Epicurus (VI 21.1: *nobis quoque*). Since Seneca frequently entertains a variety of explanations without dogmatic rejection of all but one, this apparently tolerant view of Epicurean multiple causation is striking — another mark, perhaps, of Seneca's methodological independence from his school.⁴⁶

Seneca goes on to discuss the Stoic theories of Posidonius and Asclepiodotus (VI 21 ff.) pausing to give strong assent to the collapsing-cavern explanation for many quakes (VI 23.1) and to

in the Loeb recognize that Seneca is the speaker here.

⁴⁵ Cf. Book three and V 4.2.

⁴⁶ See too above on his reasons for accepting all possible causes of the cataclysm: if the scale of the event is unique it is reasonable to invoke all possible causes.

digress briefly on Callisthenes (VI 23.2-3). In VI 24.1 he again speaks with surprising forthrightness of his preferred theory, and argues bluntly (note *hoc incredibile est* VI 24.2) in his own voice about various details of the air theory, invoking yet again the analogy with the human body (VI 24.2-3). Seneca is unequivocally in favour of a theory relying on the existence of huge unobserved underground caverns. Hence his earlier remarks about the legitimacy of postulating such unseen phenomena now bear fruit. On his view, the correct explanation of earthquakes does indeed rely on our readiness to put our minds above our eyes and to abandon naïve empiricism. As he said early in the book, the use of reason and not mere observation is required for a real explanation and consolation.

Seneca closes his general account earthquakes (VI 26) with further methodological reflection. Literary evidence is rejected, even though it might support his own favourite theory. Philosophers⁴⁷ are stigmatised (somewhat as historians have been until now) as a *credula natio* for accepting such evidence. The case is closed with terse citation of factual counterexamples (VI 26.4), and Seneca turns his attention to a series of things which were allegedly peculiar to the Campanian quake which provoked the entire discussion and other singular features (VI 27-31).

At VI 32 Seneca sets aside the causal explanation and turns explicitly to the *confirmatio animorum* which concludes the book, emphasizing that although courage is more in our interest than learning, it cannot be achieved without learning. As at the beginning of book six (this whole conclusion is a clear restatement and expansion of the introduction), so too here: it is the *contemplatio naturae* which is made the key to moral virtues. The consolatory discourse which ensues focuses, as did the introduction of the book, on the omnipresence of death and the equality of the outcome. Our happiness and equality with the gods (VI 32.5-7) depends on being ready to let go of our life easily. This discourse, surely Seneca's self-conscious reply to Lucretius' own impressive meditation on the fear of death, ranges over a number of familiar consolatory themes and concludes with the reflection that death is inevitable for all creatures, but that the timing of it is none of our concern. In the concluding

⁴⁷ Although all mss here read *philosophi* many editors have emended to *philologi* and to *historici*. How easy it is to underestimate Seneca's critical detachment, independence, and irony.

words of book six (the most polished and effective book in the entire *Natural Questions*) Seneca offers his reply not just to Lucretius but also to Plato:

Death is the law of nature, death is the debt and duty of mortals and the cure for all their misfortunes. Anyone who is afraid wishes for death. Lucilius, forget the rest and practice this alone, not to fear the word 'death'. Think on it often and so make it your intimate companion, so that if need be you can go to meet it head on.

Here Seneca fuses his theological, physical, epistemological and moral concerns more thoroughly than in any earlier book.

The opening of book seven brings the reader back to the heavens from which he began in book three. The heavens, that is to say the realm of the divine, stimulate the intellectual excitement of all but the most dull, and especially when something unprecedented or unusual happens. While the philosophically minded find the phenomena of the heavens intellectually and morally uplifting in all circumstances, human nature is such (*ita enim compositi sumus*) that familiar things, even if they are intrinsically impressive, leave us cold, while unusual phenomena, even if they are in themselves unimportant, will be a *spectaculum dulce* (VII 1.1): the stars, the sun, and the moon when not in eclipse are normally taken for granted. An unfamiliar event, such as an eclipse, has the power to excite us, even if the reaction is grounded on superstition; the actual causes of an eclipse are important, and well known to the enlightened. But the predictable reaction of human beings (neglect except in the case of novelty) confirms the importance of familiarity (VII 1.3-4). People are naturally drawn to amazement at the novel (*adeo naturale est magis nova quam magna mirari*). Seneca sees our natural and healthy empiricism as a mixed blessing; for in the absence of sound explanations of the phenomena it leaves us exposed to fear and superstition. Our reactions to comets illustrate this clearly: for like eclipses they inspire ignorant superstition and insecurity, although a sound understanding of celestial phenomena would liberate us from such panics.⁴⁸

Hence Seneca proposes to approach the understanding of comets from the point of view of their similarity to and difference from better understood phenomena, such as stars and planets (VII 2.1-2). Clearly he is aiming to combat irrational reactions to natural phenomena (which by their very nature cannot be proper grounds

⁴⁸ Cf. *Nat.* VI 3.2.

for such reactions); he is not merely explaining an interesting celestial anomaly because it is an interesting problem. Similarly, Seneca expects that the enquiry in this book will shed light on the question of whether the cosmos is geocentric or not — something worth knowing not just because it is interesting, but because it deals with the relationship of man to god: *digna res contemplatione, ut sciamus in quo rerum statu simus, pigerrimam sortiti an velocissimam sedem, circa nos deus omnia an nos agat* (VII 2.3).

With this motivation Seneca tackles the problem of the nature of comets. His aims reveal the interdependence, by now familiar, of epistemological themes and theological issues. And his procedure in the discussion which follows accords with the familiar pattern: critical review and analysis of earlier views tempered with independent argument. Hence Seneca begins with the obvious fact that we need to begin from collections of data accumulated over lengthy periods of time, data which really aren't available to us (VII 3). In the absence of this kind of data Seneca must start from a review of the theories of those who appear to be the best sources, Epigenes and Apollonius of Mynda (VII 4.1). Epigenes' views, discussed extensively against the background of as much 'evidence' as can be gathered, fare poorly (VII 4.10); often the counterargument is simple observation. When Seneca turns to other theories about celestial bodies (VII 11-15) he is direct and refreshing in his debunking of half-baked theories.⁴⁹ In VII 16 he turns to the discrediting of historians such as Ephorus as sources for observations of the heavens — and it is hard to find fault with his calculated scepticism.

In VII 17 Seneca turns to the other major authority, Apollonius of Mynda, about whom we know, alas, nothing beyond what Seneca tells us. His theory that comets are celestial bodies like planets is rejected briskly, by the simple observation that we can see through comets as we cannot see through any other *stella*, wandering or fixed (VII 18.2).⁵⁰ Then Stoic theories are outlined (VII 19-21) and Seneca presents them in sympathetic detail, even using question and answer

⁴⁹ At VII 14.1 Seneca describes the attempt to refute a particularly fanciful theory as a kind of shadow-boxing: *solvere ista quid aliud est quam manum exercere et in ventum iacere brachia?* He is quite aware of how hard it is to refute theories for which no evidence, for or against, can be found.

⁵⁰ But see below for Seneca's own exploitation of this observation. His polemical use of the argument is considerably less nuanced than his own positive use of it.

with an imaginary objector to strengthen the proposal that comets are atmospheric rather than celestial phenomena.

For all that, the standard Stoic view leaves Seneca unconvinced: *ego nostris non assentior* (VII 22.1). In his view comets are among the *aeterna opera naturae*, located beyond the transience of the lower atmosphere. Comets, in Seneca's opinion, are too stable and regular to be grouped with such phenomena (VII 22-23). He turns then to further objections to his proposal. In VII 24 it is suggested (by an unnamed critic) that celestial bodies would have to be in the zodiac somehow. The rejoinder appeals to the divine character of the *stellae*: we cannot impose such an arbitrary limit on heavenly bodies. For all we know some such bodies, all of which we cannot observe up close, might be able to appear from unknown quarters. It is the very limitation of our human ability to gather evidence which makes it irrational for us to impose a limit on entities which are so far beyond human observation (VII 24.1), a limit which would have to be arbitrary, given the limitations of our observations. And furthermore, a comet may, for all we know, actually be in the zodiac at some point in its orbit; its orbit may simply be so unusual that our limited observational data have not yet revealed their place in the planetary and stellar system (VII 24.2). And can there really be such a small number of planets as five in the vast sweep of our night sky (VII 24.3)? Here, Seneca's epistemological modesty has guided him towards an importantly though accidentally correct view.⁵¹

In VII 25 this uncertainty is compared to our knowledge of the human mind. There are many things, he says, which we know to exist without having to know the details. Since the evidence about comets is thin, we must refrain from forming negative conclusions. We know that we have a mind without being able to agree on all of the details about its nature. So too we should be able to believe that comets are *stellae* even if we cannot be certain about the details of their nature. As the book began with remarks about how limited our observational data are, so here Seneca emphasizes that our ignorance is commensurate with the limited history of observation (VII 25.3-5). Just as several features of planetary orbits were puzzling at first but eventually explained, so too we should expect there to be explanations someday for the puzzling features of the behaviour of comets: our

⁵¹ Cf. Favorinus at Aulus Gellius XIV 1.11-12 (my thanks to Emidio Spinelli for the comparison).

descendants and successors will perhaps answer some of the challenges now posed, so it would be irrational, in the current state of our knowledge of the heavens, to reject a *prima facie* appealing theory (VII 25.6-7).

Seneca is not, of course, claiming that his theories are immune to criticism because cometary science is so young. After all, he had many arguments to make against other theories, and he is therefore obliged in this section of the book to defend his view (which is after all quite modest and sketchy) in ways that are compatible with his own earlier arguments.⁵² And he does so, insisting throughout that criticisms of his proposal that comets are stellar be consistent with our general knowledge about heavenly bodies. For example, he rejects the criticism that comets do not have the standard stellar shape (round) not only by arguing that the core of a comet may well be round (VII 26.2), but also by rejecting a mechanical requirement of uniformity for all heavenly phenomena (VII 27). Nature, he contends, is a powerful force and part of her power lies in her ability to produce exceptional phenomena (VII 27.5): as important as consistency among the phenomena is, demands for premature generalizations should be resisted. The less we know, in fact, the more open-minded we should be.

These are only samples of Seneca's style of argument, but I submit that they display both his level-headed empirical respect for evidence and argument and his canny awareness that conclusions can only be as strong and definite as the quality of the evidence we have to work from. Hence just before the theological peroration of the book, Seneca concludes (VII 29.3): *haec sunt quae aut alios movere ad cometas pertinentia aut me: quae an vera sint, di sciunt, quibus veri scientia est. nobis rimari illa et coniectura ire in occulta tantum licet, nec cum fiducia inveniendi nec sine spe*. There is an epistemic humility here of which Xenophanes might be proud.⁵³

And such humility is, for Seneca, also an act of piety. In the final section of the book (VII 30-32) Seneca brings together themes which have been building slowly. The universe is a divine place, and the

⁵² In VII 26.1 Seneca concedes that our ability to see through comets presents a problem for his claim that comets are *stellae*. After all, the point had already been raised at VII 18.2. But consistency is maintained by noting that it is only the tail of the comet that one can see through, not the solid core.

⁵³ See 21B18,34DK. On the possible influence of Xenophanes in later centuries, see Guido Turrini, 'Il frammento 34 di Senofane e la tradizione dossografica', *Prometheus* 8 (1982), 17-135.

heavenly phenomena rank with the divine beings themselves in their claims on our epistemic caution. Aristotle is cited with approval for this notion, and Seneca's concern is to avoid at all costs bold or imprudent claims which run ahead of the evidence and so lead to false claims about the most important matters (VII 30.1). Panaetius and the other Stoics are particularly chastised for premature zeal in claiming that comets can be easily explained as atmospheric phenomena. Seneca thinks it critical to allow for how much lies *in occulto* (VII 30.2).

The opacity of the works of nature to human eyes (VII 30.3: *numquam humanis oculis orientia*) is the theme on which the book closes. Xenophanes again seems to hover in the wings when Seneca says that god has not made everything for us. Our eyes are not the tools to probe the depths of the natural, that is, the divine world. The god who made the world escapes visual inspection and can only be seen by means of *cogitatio*; the supreme spirit (*numen summum*) grants access only to the *animus*. We cannot, he claims, have knowledge of god, the foundation of all things (*quid sit hoc sine quo nihil est scire non possumus*). Why should we be surprised that bits of fire are not exhaustively known when *maxima pars mundi, deus*, is himself obscure (VII 30.4). Even among the more accessible bodies of knowledge, such as zoology, progress is still being made in his own time. As in the mysteries at Eleusis, so in natural philosophy: something is saved for the final revelation and *rerum natura sacra sua non semel tradit*. We have to expect that there is a great deal for future generations to discover too (VII 30.6).

This theological language is not anti-empirical, nor is it anti-rational. Seneca is not saying that there are things which we just cannot understand, that god works in intrinsically mysterious ways. He is making a more modest claim. When the evidence concerning a set of phenomena is weak, the conclusions must be weak. Hence prematurely conclusive theories are bound to lead one astray. The natural world is, he claims, a large and complicated place; there is no good reason to think that it is just laid open for us by the gods. Just the opposite, in fact. A properly pious appreciation of the relationship of human nature to the divine will induce us to be epistemically modest and to anticipate (itself quite a rational view) that progress in the explanation of the natural world will be cumulative and slow. Indeed, Seneca's final assessment (VII 31-32) is that, given the state of culture in his own day — a depraved condition in which all

ingenuity is squandered on vice and luxury, with nothing left for philosophy (esp. VII 32) — it is not to be expected that great progress will be made in his generation. Even if, he concludes pessimistically, his culture put everything it had into natural philosophy it could hardly expect to get to the bottom of things, which is where truth is to be found (*ad fundum... in quo veritas posita est*⁵⁴); but as it is, Roman culture is just idly scratching the surface (*quam nunc in summa terra et levi manu quaerimus*). The impiety which Seneca sees in this situation can readily be inferred. He does not need to spell it out.

In book seven, Seneca denied that comets were an instance of atmospheric fire. Hence the subject matter of book one, atmospheric fire, follows naturally. Similarly the preface to book one comes naturally after the conclusion of book seven. Seneca included in his consideration of comets some thoughtful remarks on the gap between the divine order and human epistemic capabilities and some quite pessimistic comments on the standing of philosophy in his own society. Hence the next book opens with a preface exploring the value of philosophy and the relationship of man to god.

The preface opens with the claim that the difference between philosophy and the other arts is as great as the difference in value between theology and ethics (*illam parten quae ad homines et hanc quae ad deos pertinet*, where ‘*hanc*’ clearly signals that his current work is theological). In addition to being superior in other ways, theology, as noted in book seven, does not limit itself to the evidence of the eyes (*non ... oculis contenta*); not only is it better, but it also eliminates the darkness in which we would otherwise be enmired. As god is superior to man, so physics and theology are superior to ethics (I Pref.1-2). The scope of physics is quickly sketched: not just the theory of matter but theology too (I Pref.3), where theology includes questions about the nature of god and fate. Seneca avers that his gratitude to nature for the opportunity to study her is so great that it would hardly be worth living otherwise. Not to study nature and god, he thinks, is to reduce oneself to a mere body, a repository for food and drink. Studying the nature of the divine cosmos is, for Seneca, at the heart of what it is to be a human being (*o quam contempta res est homo nisi supra humana surrexerit*). Man is somehow incomplete without the study of physics, which pulls us beyond ourselves and the narrow world open only to the eyes (I Pref.4-5).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Cf. Democritus, 68B 117 DK.

⁵⁵ On these themes, compare Seneca’s remarks at *Ep.* 65.15-22, 90.34 and

Seneca then expatiates eloquently on how it is that the study of cosmology carries man beyond his own parochial interests — and parochial they are, since the earth on which we live is so small compared to the size of the universe as a whole (I Pref.6-17). In the course of this Seneca confirms the intimate connection between human nature and the study of physics and theology. At I Pref.7 he claims that *tunc consummatum habet plenumque bonum sortis humanae cum calcato omni malo petit altum et in interiorem naturae sinum venit*. In I Pref.12 Seneca asserts the divinity of the mind on the basis of the fact that our mind is nourished by its exposure to the celestial, to which it really belongs (*in originem redit*), and is genuinely pleased by such studies. The heavens *belong* to the soul (*ut suis interest, scit illa ad se pertinere*). A mind exposed to its true origins comes to despise the earth, which it used to think of as its proper home (I Pref.13). The entire quest of the mind, what it seeks while it studies physics, is god:⁵⁶

There it learns at last what it has sought for so long, there it begins to know god. What is god? The mind of the cosmos. What is god? All that you see and all that you do not see. His real greatness, greater than which nothing can be conceived, is only attributed to him if he alone is all things, if he sustains his handiwork from within and from without.

The fact that god is a mind forms a crucial part of the bond between god and man. But the differences between us are just as important. For god is nothing but mind, while in us the mind is merely our better part (I Pref.14). And yet, Seneca continues, some people, philosophers as well as laymen, deny the providence and intelligence of god, i.e., nature (I Pref.14-15). He concludes with a grandiose rhetorical question about the value of studying theology and physics. Such study, he claims, takes us beyond our own mortal nature and enrolls us in a higher class (*in meliorem transcribi sortem*). If you ask, he concludes, what good this will do, he replies: *si nihil aliud, hoc certe: sciam omnia angusta esse mensus deum*. Man is not the measure of all things; god is.

In reviewing the various manifestations of atmospheric fire and light, Seneca begins by raising the question of whether certain

117.19.

⁵⁶ Note that even here Seneca expresses his sensitivity to epistemological issues, for he neatly divides the realm of enquiry by an epistemic criterion: *quod vides totum et quod non vides*.

unusual phenomena should be viewed as portents — an issue that arose when dealing with comets as well (VII 1).⁵⁷ Here (I 1.4) such issues are explicitly deferred to a later time (the final book, II 32 ff.). For there Seneca addresses the major theological issues for a final time. The rest of I 1 is a critical review of anomalous atmospheric fires and explanations offered for them. I 2 begins the discussion of haloes and related phenomena with a similarly undeveloped allusion to their portentous nature. When in I 3-8 Seneca turns to rainbows (along with mirrors, prisms and related optical phenomena) he does not invoke issues of prediction and portent, but rather limits himself to a careful and closely argued treatment of the causes, displaying his familiar independence of mind; he trails off in I 9-11 with a treatment of *virgae* before moving on (I 12-13) to eclipses and a rather heterogeneous collection of optical problems. I 14-15 return to the kind of unusual atmospheric fires with which comets had been classed and with which Seneca began. But questions of providence and portent, the relationship of man to god, are absent. Instead, Seneca concludes the book (I 16-17) with a moralizing excursus on Hostius Quadra, connected to the rest of the book by the thinnest of threads: his sexual perversion made indispensable use of mirrors. But it would be foolish to grope for a stronger connection to the rest of the book. Here, at least, is a moralizing excursus included for its own sake, and anyone who takes the time to savour it will scarcely question its interest or (admittedly prurient) literary merit.

Book two of the *Natural Questions*, the final book, is also the longest. It begins with an introductory section (II 1-11) which outlines the three relevant⁵⁸ parts of physics (*caelestia*, *sublimia*, *terrena*) and emphasizes the interdependence of the various components of the system;⁵⁹ it focuses extensively on the unity of the world, the nature of the parts within it,⁶⁰ and especially on the unique role of air in

⁵⁷ And also for earthquakes (VI 3.2); Seneca is building towards his final discussion of Etruscan divination in book two.

⁵⁸ Relevant not just because these three realms exhaust the range of physics, because also of the amount of debate about which phenomena are heavenly and which atmospheric (as in the book on comets) and because of the crucial role of terrestrial and subterranean phenomena in so many of his explanations. This tripartition does not represent a basic organizing principle for the entire work.

⁵⁹ II 2 presents a quite technical categorization of the metaphysical underpinnings for the kind of unity which the cosmos has; cf. *Ep.* 102. Seneca's self-consciousness about technicality is reflected clearly in II 2.4: *vide quomodo auribus tuis parcam.*

⁶⁰ Notice the nice distinction between *genera*, which are true parts, and

creating and preserving that unity (II 4.1-2), culminating in a minor hymn, one might say, to the power and nature of air.⁶¹ Stoic doctrines about the continuous nature of air and its variability are affirmed. Two epistemological themes emerge in passing: the familiar distinction between things graspable by the senses and those grasped by reason (II 2.3), and the bold claim that the cosmos is epistemically exhaustive: 'the cosmos embraces everything which does or can fall within [the scope of] our knowledge' (II 3.1).⁶² There is nothing, then, which a human being can know which is not part of the cosmos — we have, clearly, an important explicit assertion of naturalism; this is welcome, since the repeated emphasis in the *Natural Questions* on the fact that there are things which the senses cannot grasp or that can only be grasped by reason might lead one to suspect the influence of a quasi-Platonic dualism.⁶³ But the existence of things graspable only by reason is compatible with Stoic monism, just as much as the distinction in value between earthly and celestial realms (reaffirmed in II 1.5).

The stated reason for this lengthy account of air is that the phenomena which form the proper topic of the book (lightning, thunderbolts, thunderclaps) occur in the atmosphere, and hence require a general idea of the nature of air in order to control the discussion. And air does play a crucial role in what follows. But so too does the cosmological doctrine that the cosmos is an orderly creation, which emerges from the discussion of unity (see, e.g., II 13.4: *ordo rerum ... ignis in custodia mundi ... sortitus oras operis pulcherrimi*). The importance of air increases in sections II 15- II 20, and one of the most important ways it bears on explanations rests on the intimate interdependence of air and other elements, especially fire (II 20).

individuals, which are quasi-parts, in II 4.2. On the Stoic theory of parts generally see J. Barnes, 'Bits and Pieces', in *Matter and Metaphysics* (ed. J. Barnes and M. Mignucci), Naples 1988, 223-294.

⁶¹ Seneca repeatedly (II 6.2, II 7.1-2) rejects a corpuscular theory of air in favour of the orthodox continuum theory.

⁶² Corcoran's Loeb translation misleads when it says "the term 'universe' includes...". There is no sign in Seneca's Latin that his point is merely semantic. Note too that at I Pref.13 Seneca defined god as *quod vides totum et quod non vides totum*. Since god is the cosmos, it follows that what we do or can know (the cosmos) can be divided neatly into the visible and invisible, a conclusion which meshes perfectly with Seneca's other remarks about the relationship between sense-perception and the mind.

⁶³ As did Donini 1979.

At II 21.1 Seneca moves on from the straightforward review of earlier theories (including Aristotle and a number of Presocratics as well as the Stoics) and strikes out on his own (*dimissis nunc praeceptoribus nostris incipimus per nos moveri*). And this transition is marked as well by a self-conscious transition to grappling with more speculative topics (*a confessis transimus ad dubia*). Sensibly enough, Seneca begins by isolating what is agreed upon (II 21.2-3) and shifting the focus of discussion back to fire from air. For Seneca's own treatment of these phenomena (II 22-26) is indeed characterized by a stronger focus on fire and a de-emphasis of air, at least until he turns his attention back to thunder (II 27-30). Throughout this section he makes use of views advanced by Posidonius and his follower Asclepiodotus.

A remarkably brief expatiation on the wondrous effects of lightning (II 31) forms the transition to Seneca's next major topic. At II 32 Seneca comes to the question which has been prepared in earlier books and has no doubt been most on his mind throughout the book: the use of lightning and related phenomena to give signs of future events — and not just individual events but entire long series of fated events.⁶⁴ Seneca contrasts his own (or perhaps the Roman or the Stoic) approach to that of the Etruscans (*inter nos et Tuscos... interest*). The Etruscans represent a distinctly non-philosophical theological approach to the world. Hence they form the ideal foil (at the climax of his book) for Seneca's own stringently rational yet still theological treatment of the realm of nature. Seneca says of the Etruscans: *omnia ad deum referent* (II 32.2). As we have seen, the same could quite properly be said of Seneca himself. But unlike Seneca they hold, for example, that atmospheric events actually occur *in order to* serve as signs. Seneca's more restrained theological view (which is more philosophical in so far as it is more responsive to epistemological considerations) is that these phenomena serve as signs because they are part of the divinely structured nexus of cause and effect, not because god takes the time to send specific signs for individual events (II 32.2-4). His objector wonders how any such events can be signs if they are not designed for that purpose (II 32.3); and Seneca replies that this is rather like the situation with bird-

⁶⁴ For pertinent background to Seneca's views here, see the recent discussion of divination by Carlos Lévy, 'De Chrysippe à Posidonius: Variations Stoïciennes sur le thème de la divination', in J.-G. Heintz (ed.), *Oracles et Prophéties dans l'Antiquité*, Strasbourg 1997, 321-343. My thanks to Lévy for a timely offprint. See also Gigon 1991, 335-9.

omens. Bird signs, like dreams and other forms of augury, are not the particular and individual works of god; but nevertheless they are divine handiwork (*nihilominus divina ope geruntur* II 32.4). Simply being part of an orderly and rationally structured sequence of cause and effect is enough to make something a divine sign; by contrast, random events, not guided by a rational order, cannot be useful in divination. But anything for which there is an *ordo* can be the basis for a prediction (II 32.4).

Seneca's characteristic interest in epistemic limitations helps him in what follows. For at II 32.5 he tackles a question of some import: if anything which is a part of the orderly sequence of cause and effect is potentially significant, why are some things privileged for predictive purposes? What is so special about the eagle, the raven, and a few other birds that they should be predictors of the future? Well, Seneca grants, nothing. The fact that divination uses those birds and not others is a contingency; it is the accident of the availability of observation which limits our science, not the variability among phenomena: *nullum animal est quod non motu et occurſu ſuo praedicat aliquid. Non omnia ſcilicet, quaedam notantur*. Predictive signs are relative to the observer (II 32.6), and this applies even to the stellar omens of the Chaldaeans.⁶⁵ Just as there are no intrinsically non-predictive animals, so too there are no non-predictive stars. It might seem that the planets are doing all of the causal and so predictive work in the heavens, but this is an illusion grounded in the contingent fact that some stars, like some animals, are easier to observe than others (II 32.7-8).

Thus Seneca launches his rationalistic critique of various aspects of divination and its relationship to religious beliefs (II 33, where the third part directly affects religious practice). In II 34 he rejects the claim that lightning-based omens override all others. This, he says, cannot be so, since all predictive omens work in the same way, as part of the same system. No truth is truer than any other, and any true prediction has the same weight as any other. There is, Seneca holds, a single system of truth about the world, called fate. It is certainly true that one sort of omen might predict the future better than another, just as one kind of sign might be better than another. But *if* a sign predicts truly, then it cannot be overridden by another. Divination is not a struggle for power among divine forces. It is simply the way we

⁶⁵ Cf. VII 4.1 on students of the Chaldaeans.

humans attempt to read the fated and rationally regulated future; failures to predict are epistemic failures, not failures of order in the world. Hence in II 35-36 Seneca quite properly rejects the view that expiatory ceremonies and propitiatory exercises can change the future. Fate, Seneca knows as a good Stoic, is fixed. Attempts to change it might be *solacia aegrae mentis*, but they have no other effect. (And we know from book six what Seneca thinks is the proper solace: a rational grasp of the human condition.)⁶⁶

Following this line of thought, Seneca seeks common ground with the more traditionally religious by employing the familiar argument based on *confatalia* (II 37-38):⁶⁷ there is a place for expiation and propitiation, but not in such a way that there is real uncertainty about the future. The gods leave some things *suspensa* and so responsive to our prayers (II 37.2); but even so if they are to occur we must pray for them, and those prayers are part of the sequence of cause and effect in the natural world. Hence the diviner does have a function: as a *fati minister* (II 38.4⁶⁸) he is part of the causal chain which leads to my prayers and so to the results determined by fate. There is, on Seneca's view as on the orthodox view of his school, no conflict between individual choice (*nostra voluntas* II 38.3) and fate.

Having turned his attention to the relationships between the interpreter and the signs as read, in the context of divinely ordered fate, it is natural to continue (II 39 ff.) with a critique of the most authoritative spokesman for the Etruscan science at Rome, Aulus Caecina. (It emerges soon that Caecina is a foil for the Stoic Attalus, Seneca's former teacher, whose views on divination feature prominently in this book.)⁶⁹ Whereas Caecina classified lightning signs as being kinds of lightning (in particular: advisory, evaluative, descriptive⁷⁰), Seneca not only took issue with the details of this classification (II 39.3-4) but also pointed out that what Caecina was really doing was classifying the kinds of interpretative use and not the kinds of lightning (II 40). Types of lightning should be classified by their behaviour and appearance; but the use made of their significations is

⁶⁶ Compare the contrast of *prudentes* and the wise in book six.

⁶⁷ Cf. *SVF* II 956-958. On this theme, see the recent discussion by Susanne Bobzien in *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*, Oxford 1998, chapter 5. Bobzien has several perceptive things to say about this passage in Seneca.

⁶⁸ Cf. III 28.4 where the tides perform a *fati ministerium*.

⁶⁹ See my brief remarks on Attalus in 'Seneca in his philosophical milieu', *HSCP* 97 (1995), 69.

⁷⁰ *consilium, auctoritatis, status*. Corcoran's translations are unsatisfactory.

relative to the interpreter (cf. II 32.6). It is a methodological muddle to classify natural phenomena primarily in terms of our use of them.

At this point Seneca turns to further critiques of the Etruscan pseudo-scientific version of divination. Their views about Jupiter's various kinds of lightning are mired in superstition and represent at best a projection onto him of human needs; the ancients, Seneca thinks, did not really believe these myths. The idea of an avenging Jupiter is useful (II 42.3) and the notion that he consults before punishing is a good model for political leaders (II 43). The idea that Jupiter has different kinds of thunderbolt is also symbolically useful (II 44). The Etruscans (and Caecina) are foolish to base their claims on the presumed beliefs of the ancients, whom they clearly underestimated. Jupiter is, as the ancients and Etruscans apparently hold, identified with the one rational fate and providence recognized in Stoic theory (II 45-46). The more challenging issues of theodicy are deferred.⁷¹

In II 47-51 Seneca again broaches classificatory issues, finding fault in a detailed way with the Etruscan system and that of Caecina. The Stoic Attalus, often admired by Seneca, had a better system, better (it seems) because it built on the basic insight that the meanings of such signs are relative to the human observer. He goes on to celebrate the power of lightning (II 52-53), capping this section with a restatement of the superiority of philosophy to the Etruscan arts as a way of analyzing such matters. And with that he abandons the Etruscans and concludes the book with a consideration of philosophical views: Posidonius, Clidemus, Heraclitus, and his own theories.

Book two, and the entire *Natural Questions*, ends like so many of the letters with a consolatory moral application. Lucilius has, in Seneca's conceit (II 59.1),⁷² been growing impatient with all of this detail. 'I'd rather lose my fear of thunderbolts than come to understand them, so teach someone else how they occur in nature.' And Seneca, naturally, obliges. The hidden secrets of nature, the pursuit of the divine in the world should yield a salutary moral. So Seneca concludes with a moving rhetorical passage reminding the reader of the message of book six: that death is universal, natural and inevitable. Hence there is nothing to fear in lightning. Its strike is fatal, so

⁷¹ Contra Oltramare and Corcoran, the reference is not to our *Prov.*, which, following Griffin 1992, I think was written earlier.

⁷² Waiblinger 1977, 71 rather soberly takes this too much at face value.

fear is irrational. If it strikes us, well, death is inevitable and it is not the worst way to die. And if it misses us, then we are fine. The concluding words underscore the astringently rational self-assessment we are used to in Seneca. Fear of lightning is irrational: *nemo umquam timuit fulmen nisi quod effugit* (II 59.13).

In his old age, Seneca devoted a quite surprising amount of energy to meteorological enquiry. However partial this discussion of the themes of the *Natural Questions* might be (and it could hardly be anything else), it should by now be evident that the purpose of the work is markedly different from that of other meteorological enquiries. Whether the themes I have chosen to emphasize are central or subordinate, the work offers the reader striking consolation for the fear of death; a sober analysis of the relationship between the cosmic order and human life; challenging epistemological reflections, focussing on the ambivalent nature of human knowledge in a cosmos which is rational but not fully open to our enquiring minds; and a sustained meditation on the relationship of man to a rational god, providential but disinclined to reveal the truth except through his orderly and causally determinate works. These are all well established Stoic themes, and Seneca has to go out of his way to underline his independence from the theories of his school. This he does with critical (and sometimes waspish) argument and debate.

In the end, we have to ask why he chose to pack all of this into a work on what was evidently the driest and least appealing genre in the philosophical repertoire. None of Seneca's central themes *needed* to be embedded in the framework of a *Natural Questions*. Most of them, in fact, would be better communicated in works on cosmology, ethics, epistemology, or in *Letters* which are free of most thematic constraints. I conclude by repeating the suggestion I made at the beginning of this paper: Seneca chose to work these ideas out in a meteorological treatise for literary reasons. This, he must have thought, was a challenge worthy of his considerable rhetorical talents. If he could pull this off, he would have an even stronger claim to fame as writer, not just as a philosopher. But such challenges are also risks. The judgement of the centuries has been, regrettably, that Seneca failed. And in literary terms that judgement is perhaps

correct.⁷³ Nevertheless, in the background of this literary challenge Seneca developed independent ideas about physics, theology and philosophical method of considerable interest and sophistication.

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⁷³ Though tastes differ, and some parts of the work, such as book six, are masterpieces.

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EPICURUS AS DEUS MORTALIS:
HOMOIOSIS THEOI AND EPICUREAN SELF-CULTIVATION

MICHAEL ERLER

1. The concept of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, of ‘becoming like god so far as it is possible’, constitutes the goal of Plato’s ethics. A major part in the Platonic tradition was played by the ideal of ‘likeness to God’, which was derived from the locus classicus of this topic: *Theaitetus* 176b.¹ It became a τέλος formula with the middle Platonists, which probably originated in the first century B.C.² It remained the distinctive Platonic definition of the *telos* ever after. Though acknowledged as the nucleus of Platonic philosophy Origines can say that becoming like god also represents the *summum bonum* of almost every other philosophical school, to which one should add however that those other schools poured ‘new wine into old bottles’.³

In fact for Plato and the Platonists assimilation to god means the embodiment of moral ideas as far as it is possible for man, whereas Aristotle and the Peripatetics stress the contemplative way of life and the Stoics the fulfilment of moral duties and obedience to virtue.⁴

¹ Merki 1952; cf. J. Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man*, London 1970; D. Roloff, *Göttlichkeit, Vergöttlichung und Erhöhung zu seligem Leben. Untersuchungen zur Herkunft der platonischen Angleichung an Gott*, Berlin 1970; D.S. du Toit, *THEIOS ANTHROPOS*, Tübingen 1997.

² J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, London 1977, 114-135, esp. 121-126, attributes the *telos* formula to Eudoros; contra P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen, I*, Berlin/New York 1967, 267ff. and Lévy 1990, who also deals with the later tradition of the concept. For the later tradition of the concept, see H. Dörrie and M. Baltes (eds.), *Der Platonismus in der Antike*, Band 5. Bausteine 125-150, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1998, esp. 130.2 = Klemens von Alexandrien, *Strom.* IV 155, 2-4 with commentary 307-312 with further references (esp. 311 notes 34, 35); see also D.T. Runia, ‘God and Man in Philo of Alexandria’, *JThS* 39 (1998) 48-75, now in: *Exegesis and Philosophy. Studies on Philon of Alexandria*, Aldershot 1990, NR. XII (R. 613a-c. *Th.* 176b-c).

³ Cf. Orig., *De princ.* III vi 1.

⁴ For the Stoics, see Cic., *N.D.* II 147. 153; Zeno *SVF* I 179. 180, cf. Merki 1952, 7ff.; Aristotle (*NE* 1177b30ff.) stresses the contemplative aspect, obviously referring to *Tim.* 90c-d (cf. Sedley 1997, 327ff. Piso as Peripatetic praises *Fin.* V 11: *contemplatio (...) quae quia deorum erat vitae simillima, sapiente visa dignissima*). For Cicero’s position as Academic, cf. *Lg.* I 24 and P. Boyancé, ‘Cicéron et les semailles d’âme du “Timée”’, *Romanitas* 3 (1961) 111-117 (in: *Etudes sur l’humanisme ciceronienne*, Bruxelles 1970 (Latomus 121), 294-301); cf. Lévy 1990, 59. For

The concept of *homoiosis theoi* was of importance for the Epicureans as well. Testimonies about the veneration of Epicurus himself within the *garden* and remarks by Cicero affirm that the divine is regarded as a 'norm of moral emulation'.⁵ Since the gods represent the Epicurean ideal of tranquillity and pleasure, they are paradigms of moral excellence which are to be imitated. Despite his inability to attain the immortal existence of the gods and without hope of their helpful intervention in the world, the Epicurean man is able to achieve a state through imitation of a constitution which comes close to divinity by preserving a true conception of the true nature of the gods. Most of the information about how to achieve assimilation to god is to be found in the religious treatises of Philodemus.⁶

In what follows however I would like to suggest that some more information can be added, if one reads the proem of the fifth book of Lucretius *De rerum natura* in the context of the Epicurean *homoiosis*-concept. Of course this passage has been interpreted very often mostly with respect to its literary implications. Recently Monica Gale offered a very interesting account. She seeks to prove that Lucretius was writing against a Euhemerian background.⁷

Nevertheless, I would like to suggest an alternative reading. I shall argue that at the beginning of book five Lucretius presents us with the result of a successful *homoiosis theoi*, and gives an idea about the conditions which are to be fulfilled if one is to become like god. These prescriptions are less general than those that we can find in other Epicurean texts. And I think there is further evidence: in

Epicurus and the Epicureans see Epicur., *Ep. Men.* 135. *Gnom. Vat.* 33 and G. Arrighetti (ed.), *Epicuro. Opere*, Torino 1973², 563. The Epicureans and Aristotle are more optimistic in how far man can get by *homoiosis theoi*. Plato restricts the endeavour by the addition 'so far as is possible' (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) (cf. *R.* 500c. 613a, *Lg.* 716c). The Stoics are pessimistic that anyone can reach the status of a sage at all (Chrys. *SVF* II 1011 = Cic., *N.D.* III 10, 25; *SVF* II 1012 = Cic., *N.D.* II 6, 16). Aristotle and the Epicureans are more optimistic. As Epicurus claims, time does not matter in terms of happiness (KD XIX), cf. Schmid 1951, 139f. A strong difference in Athenian religion between the Classical and Hellenistic age, argued for by Festugière 1968², has been challenged recently by J.D. Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1998, 1ff.

⁵ Quotation: Obbink 1996, 9. About the Epicurus cult among the Epicureans, cf. Diog. Laert., 10, 18; Cic., *Fin.* II 101 and Cicero's remarks *Tusc.* I 48; *N.D.* I 43; see Clay 1986.

⁶ Cf. Schmid 1951, 148; Festugière 1968², 36-100.

⁷ Cf. Gale, 1994, 75-80. Praises of Epicurus, cf. I 66ff.; III 2; V 9; VI 4; see W. Fauth, 'Divus Epicurus. Zur Problemgeschichte philosophischer Religiosität bei Lukrez', in: *ANRW* I 4, 1973, 205-225, esp. 217-225.

Adversus mathematicos Sextus Empiricus criticizes the Epicureans for attributing divine happiness to man:

According to them (sc. the Epicureans) happiness (εὐδαιμονία) was a divine (*daimonia*) and godly nature, and the word 'happy' (*eudaimon*) was applied to someone who had his deity (*daimon*) disposed well (*eu*) (trans. L.-S.).⁸

This of course refers back to a famous passage in the *Timaeus* (90c), where Plato uses the etymology of *eu-daimonia* when he speaks about the man who concentrates on developing his *intellect*, i.e. the *immortal part of his soul*:

Because he always takes care of that which is divine, and has the *daimon* (δαίμων) that lives with him well (εὖ) ordered, he will be supremely happy' (90c).

Following Sextus the Epicureans argued — to quote Long-Sedley's gloss — that "happiness (*eudaimonia*) was not only a 'divine and godly nature', but also the state of having one's own god properly sorted out".⁹

This passage was obviously influential. Xenocrates drew on the *Timaeus* passage to make use of the etymology of *eu-daimonia*.¹⁰ Poseidonios also echoes the passage, which influenced the stoic conception of *homoiosis*.¹¹ Now, we might recall that in both the cosmological context of the *Timaeus* and the social one of the *Laws* we find important remarks about the Platonic concept of *homoiosis theoi*. More than that: in the *Timaeus* Plato not only presents us with what he thinks to be the right way to become similar to god and immortal. He also at least hints at a different possibility, a concept of *homoiosis* which is concerned with the mortal part of the soul, a concept that makes this mortal part of the soul the true self of man and aims at the 'perfection of this mortal self'. It is here, I think, that the Epicureans also might have recognised components, which would enable them to construct their own theory, or at least to contrast it with the Platonic concept of assimilation to god. W. Schmid and Father Festugière have shown that despite fundamental differences the concept

⁸ S. E., *M.* 9, 43-7, = 23 F, 3 L.-S. (Long and Sedley 1987).

⁹ *Tim.* 90c ἄτε δὲ αἰεὶ θεραπεύοντα τὸ θεῖον ἔχοντά τε αὐτὸν εὖ κεκοσμημένον τὸν δαίμονα σύνοικον ἐν ἑαυτῷ, διαφερόντως εὐδαιμόνα εἶναι. Quotation in Long and Sedley 1987, 1, 146.

¹⁰ Cf. Xenocrates, frg. 236 Isnardi Parente = Arist., *Top.* II 6, 112a32ff. = fr. 81 H. Cf. H.J. Krämer, *Platonismus und hellenistische Philosophie*, Berlin 1971, 172f., also referring to Aristotle and Poseidonios.

¹¹ Cf. Poseidonios, Galen. *De Hipp. et Plat. Plac.* 448, 15ff., cf. Merki 1952, 1ff.

of Epicurean *homoiosis* contains what W. Schmid calls *platonische Ingredienzien*.¹²

I suggest — and this is my second claim — that Lucretius himself encourages us to look out for those ‘Ingredienzien’. He does so, I think, by the famous exclamation by which Epicurus’ apotheosis commences: ‘*deus ille fuit, deus*’. The *doctus et philosophus poeta* Lucretius might thereby wish to give a signal to readers that they should be aware of the Platonic background of what he is going to say. This proclamation of course derives from cult language and many parallels have been adduced both from poetry and cult.¹³ Yet it should be taken into account that Plato’s *Laws* also begin with the same kind of exclamation, in fact the only parallel in a philosophical context known to me. ‘It is a god, stranger, a god’ is said of the source of the legal arrangements which he is going to describe (624a θεός, ὃ ξένε, θεός, ὥς γε τὸ δικαιοτάτον εἰπεῖν). This exclamation foreshadows the main topic of the *Laws*, as Myles Burnyeat has seen:¹⁴ the divine legislator and sociology. However this might also remind us of the topic of the *Timaeus*: cosmology and anthropology, because in the *Timaeus* the divine legislator puts the cosmos into order and because the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* are closely connected to each other. But let us keep in mind that cosmology, anthropology and sociology are also dealt with in book five of *De rerum natura*. And it has been observed that in this book Lucretius — or his source which was most probably Epicurus’ *De natura*¹⁵ — refers to the tenets of the *Timaeus* either directly or indirectly, and mainly critically. It might therefore be worthwhile to compare what Lucretius has to say and what we read in the *Timaeus* and in the *Laws*.

I shall proceed as follows: first I would like to remind us of Plato’s concept of *homoiosis theoi* in the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* to create the background for our reading of Lucretius; second I wish to interpret the beginning of book five as offering a view on Epicurus as a paradigm of a successful *homoiosis theoi*; finally I shall try to compare the passages and to draw some conclusions from what has been observed.

¹² Schmid 1951, 148.

¹³ Cf. Vergil’s imitation in *Ecl.* I 6; V 64 and E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro Aeneis Buch VI*, Leipzig/Berlin 1916, 136ff. (on A. 6, 46).

¹⁴ M. Burnyeat, ‘First Words’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 43 (1997) 1-19, esp. 9.

¹⁵ Cf. D. Sedley, D., ‘How Lucretius Composed the *De rerum natura*,’ in: K. Algra, L. Koenen, and Schrijvers 1997, 1-19, esp. 11f., now further developed in Sedley 1998, 155ff.

I

1. The passage in Sextus suggested that the Epicureans drew upon the *Timaeus* to describe the happy state man can achieve. They obviously had in mind the passage where Plato's Timaios talks about man's assimilation to god. Let us therefore set the scene by some remarks about the Platonic concept of *homoiosis theoi* as far as it is relevant for what I am trying to show, and then to approach the *Timaeus*.

As the speech of Diotima in the *Symposium* (207e-209e) and other passages in Plato's works show, the theme of achieving immortality plays the key role in the Platonic concept of *homoiosis theoi*, though Plato does not always make this as clear as in his earlier work. Plato talks about *homoiosis* in the digression of the *Theaetetus* (176b-c), where assimilation to god is described as a primarily moral aim, god being the standard. Plato talks about the concept ethically in the *Republic* (611d-e) as well as referring to the domain of the intelligible. Those passages are the ones mostly drawn upon in the later Platonic tradition.¹⁶

In the *Timaeus* however, the cosmological aspect becomes prevalent. The study of nature is offered as a means of turning our minds away from the realm of becoming to that of true being. Since nature, cosmology, anthropology, biology and sociology is what Lucretius' poem is about, and especially the fifth book as well, it seems reasonable to concentrate on what Plato in the *Timaeus* says about the concept of *homoiosis theoi* 'physically' (φυσικῶς), as Stobaeus calls it.¹⁷ As elsewhere in Plato's work the absolute standard for moral action is set by god. Since Plato proposes that a part of the soul is immortal, man is able to achieve this goal 'so far as it is possible for him', if only one concentrates on the immortal part of one's self. Happiness can be found in the godlike state of the rational soul only. *Homoiosis theoi* therefore strives for freeing the soul from all that is mortal, and for supreme fulfilment of its immortal nature. This means the soul has to re-establish its ancient nature. This is necessary, because contact with the world of becoming creates disorder in the soul. In order to

¹⁶ Other passages relevant for the *homoiosis* concept in Plato are *R.* 500c-501b; *R.* 613a-b; *Lg.* 716c-d; *Phaed.* 81a-84b; *Phaedr.* 245c-249a; *Tim.* 41d-47c. 90a-d.

¹⁷ Cf. Stobaios II 49, 8-25 (perhaps his source here is Eudoros): Plato talks about the concept 'physically' in the *Timaeus*, 'ethically' in the *Republic* and 'logically' in the *Theaetetus*.

return to its original nature, the soul has to achieve knowledge of the godlike and non-material order of the soul of the cosmos. It is expected to imitate it and to assimilate itself to it as far as it is possible.¹⁸

To do so, the soul has to focus on its immortal part and has to overcome the world of becoming in order to come close to the Forms and to embody them in moral actions. However, not everybody is able to achieve this goal. Only the philosopher's soul will have the chance to become *like god* — not a god itself — as far as it is possible for a human being, which does not mean *impossible*.¹⁹ By doing so the human soul contributes to the good status of the world, which the creator, being good himself, strives for. Plato's concept of *homoiosis theoi* therefore is part of his teleological cosmology.

It is of interest for our purpose that in the *Timaeus* in the context of the *homoiosis* Plato mentions two ways of life: either you concentrate on the immortal and rational part of the soul, make it your true self and feed it by true wisdom — in which case the soul will gain intellectual excellence and will have the chance to achieve immortality. However, Plato makes Timaeus say, there might be those who choose otherwise. They have devoted their lives to the appetites or to competition and preoccupations which belong to the mortal part of the soul.

Now if a man is engrossed in appetites and ambitions and spends all his pains upon these, all his thoughts must necessarily be mortal, and altogether, so far as it is possible to become par excellence mortal, he will not fall the least bit short of this, because it is the mortal part of himself that he has developed (90b) (transl. Cornford-Sedley).²⁰

In short such persons make the mortal part of the soul their true self. From that it follows that the only thing they think they can do is to make their 'mortal' self as perfect as possible. To use Timaeus' words earlier in that dialogue (71d),

¹⁸ Cf. *Tim.* 90d. R. 500b-d; Th. A. Szlezák, 'Psyche-Polis-Kosmos,' in: E. Rudolph (ed.), *Polis und Kosmos, Naturphilosophie und politische Philosophie bei Platon*, Darmstadt 1996, 26-42.

¹⁹ Like man's soul the gods themselves gain their status (θεῖος) by seeing the ideas (*Phaedr.* 249c πρὸς οἷσπερ θεὸς ὧν θεῖός ἐστιν). For the addition by Plato (*Th.* 176b. R. 613b'κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν' in later discussion, cf. Lévy 1990, 51ff.

²⁰ Cf. *Tim.* 90b τῷ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἢ περὶ φιλονικίας τετευτακότι καὶ ταῦτα διαπονοῦντι σφόδρα πάντα τὰ δόγματα ἀνάγκη θνητὰ ἐγγεγονέναι, καὶ παντάπασιν καθ' ὅσον μάλιστα δυνατόν θνητῷ γίγνεσθαι, τούτου μηδὲ σμικρὸν ἐλλείπειν, ἅτε τὸ τοιοῦτον ηὔξηκότι. To become mortal par excellence, that is, means to deal with appetites (ἐπιθυμίας) and competition (φιλονικίας) "διαπονῶν σφόδρα" (90b).

‘they (sc. our makers) try to make the mortal race as perfect as possible and they try to set even the baser part of us on the right path in this way’ (transl. Cornford-Sedley).²¹

Homoiosis theoi, Plato believes, can be achieved only if one focuses on the immortal soul. In the *Timaeus* Plato therefore stresses the importance of intellectual virtues. Practical moral deliberation and the so-called political virtues are recommended, but are not dealt with extensively.²²

2. This focus however changes as we leave the *Timaeus* and switch to the *Laws*. Here the aspect of moral practice prevails. The Athenian stranger has a lot to say about how to deal with what he calls the human nature, taking up what Timaeus has to say about it in the *Timaeus*.²³ Self-control is required in order to harmonize the parts of the soul — because lust and pain are regarded as sources of disorder in the soul and of moral mistakes — and in order to control the desires which are located in the mortal part of the soul. The stranger mostly concentrates on moral virtues and shows that the desires have to be subdued by reason in order to become dear to, and similar to, god. To exert control over them means, or, so Plato argues, to impose measure, which comes from god. In a central passage of the work Plato comes back to his concept of *homoiosis theoi*. Here the traditional concept is enriched by the introduction of the notion of measure, ‘for unmeasured things are dear neither to one another nor to things moderate’ (716c).²⁴ *Homoiosis theoi* now means the

²¹ Cf. *Tim.* 71d οἱ συστήσαντες ἡμᾶς, ὅτε τὸ θνητὸν ἐπέστελλεν γένος ὡς ἄριστον εἰς δύνάμιν ποιεῖν, οὕτω δὴ κατορθοῦντες καὶ τὸ φαῦλον ἡμῶν.

²² Political versus philosophical *aretai* cf. Plat. *Phaed.* 82b. *R.* 500d; see W. Theiler, ‘Rez. O. Schissel von Fleschenberg, Marinos von Neapolis und die neuplatonischen Tugendgrade’, *Gnomon* 5 (1929) 307-317; C. Zintzen, ‘Römisches und Neuplatonisches bei Macrobius, Bemerkungen zur πολιτικὴ ἀρετὴ im *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* I 8’, in: P. Steinmetz (ed.), *Politeia und Res Publica: Gedenkschrift R. Stark*, Wiesbaden 1969, 357-376.

²³ Cf. *Tim.* 64bf. and *Lg.* 732e. 644c-654c. 733a. 643e; about the relation between these two dialogues see A. Laks, ‘Legislation and Demiurgy: On the Relationship between Plato’s Republic and Laws’, *ClAnt.* 9 (1990) 209-229; G. Naddaf, ‘The Atlantis Myth: An Introduction to Plato’s Later Philosophy of History’, *Phoenix* 48 (1994) 189-209; K. Schöpsdau, *Platon. Nomoi (Gesetze) Buch I-III*, Übersetzung und Kommentar von K. Schöpsdau (Platon, *Werke* IX 2, hg. v. E. Heitsch und C.W. Müller), Göttingen 1994, esp. 126ff.

²⁴ *Lg.* 716c ὅτι τῷ μὲν ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὅμοιον ὄντι μετρίῳ φίλον ἂν εἴη, τὰ δ’ ἄμετρα οὐτ’ ἀλλήλοις οὐτε τοῖς ἐμμέτροις: this means ‘new wine in old bottles’, because ‘clean’ now signifies a state of mind; cf. Morrow 1993 and W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge 1985, 332ff. H.J. Krämer, *Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles* Heidelberg 1959, underlines the importance of ‘measure’ for Plato.

assimilation to a god who is a true measure of all things (715a-716d).

What is of interest for us in this context is that now the practical aspect prevails. For the stranger poses the question, what kind of conduct makes one dear to god? Two prescriptions are to be fulfilled, which help to make men dear to god (716c):

a) what Plato calls political virtue is required to control the desires of the mortal part of one's own soul and to take care of the affections, in short to adopt the orderliness of divine nature, and the measure, and to assimilate to god, because 'Not man, as they say, but god is the measure of all things' (716c);²⁵

b) second, we need to have the *right opinion*, because it is the character of the worshipper, not the correct performance of the ritual, that will be rewarded by god (ἀκάθαρτος γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν). The opinion of the worshipper has to be pure, because as we learn in the *Theaetetus* (177a), the sphere of the gods is itself purified from evil (καθαρὸς τῶν κακῶν). The Athenian stranger thinks, that 'to engage in sacrifice and communion with the gods is helpful towards the happy life' (716d). But this only works if man is of a good and pure opinion (716e). Morrow rightly recognized here a basically new approach to religious *praxis*:

This brief passage contains a profound reinterpretation of familiar practise. It is not an exchange of services between men and gods ..., but a means of assimilating oneself to the gods one worships by adopting the orderliness that characterizes the divine nature.²⁶

Let us sum up: the *Timaetus* and the *Laws* develop different aspects of the Platonic concept of *Homoiosis theoi*, not different concepts. It is because of the different context that Plato in the *Laws* stresses practical prescriptions. The important role of *theoria* for developing the immortal self, which Plato was talking about in the *Timaetus*, is now supplemented by prescriptions for practical morality, which concern the affection of the soul and proper religious behaviour. The standard for this moral practice is *measure* (μέτρον), which comes from god.

Now, measure — god, not man, as standard for moral behaviour, contemplation and control of desire — mortal versus immortal self:

²⁵ Cf. *Lg.* 716c ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἡμῖν πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἂν εἴη μάλιστα, καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ πού τις, ὥς φασιν, ἄνθρωπος. For political virtue in the *Laws* cf. 643e.733a (σωφροσύνη) and H. Görgemanns, *Beiträge zur Interpretation von Platons Nomoi*, München 1960, 113ff.

²⁶ Morrow 1993, 400.

these will become some of the catchwords which play an important role in the discussions of the philosophical schools about how to achieve assimilation to god. Other authors as well drew on the *Timaeus* passage, when dealing with *homoiois*. I would just like to name Aristotle. In a recent paper David Sedley²⁷ argues convincingly, I think, that Aristotle in the final book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is strongly influenced by our *Timaeus* passage. Like Plato, Aristotle concentrates on the immortal self of man. He also obviously follows Plato in downgrading the importance of moral virtue and concentrates almost entirely on *theoria*, a position which is followed by later Peripatetics, as Piso's words show in Cicero's *De finibus*. This shows that the *Timaeus* in fact played an important role in the discussion about *homoiosis*.

I suggest this is true of the Epicureans too; and the proem of book five of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* shows this. I already mentioned that the content of book five — cosmology, anthropology, society — matches the content of the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*. Again, David Sedley reminds us that in book five one can discover a lot of parallels in content and structure with what Epicurus writes in *De natura*, books eleven-twelve; and that one can also recognize a lot of critical references to the *Timaeus*, perhaps mediated by Theophrastus.²⁸

As it will turn out shortly, the beginning of book five can also be read as a kind of response to the choice of lives Plato offers in the *Timaeus*: Lucretius praises Epicurus, because he opted for the alternative rejected by Plato. He obviously made the mortal part of the soul his true self; he concentrated on this mortal self and to do so he fulfilled the conditions which Lucretius is talking about.

II

1.0. Let us begin with 'godlike Epicurus' himself as Lucretius describes him. I would like to show that the traditional apostrophe '*deus ille fuit, deus*' in Lucretius' proem indeed stands for a choice of life. Lucretius uses the topos of cult language in a way, well known in Hellenistic poetry:²⁹ of course Epicurus is worthy of being called a

²⁷ See Sedley 1997a.

²⁸ See D. Sedley 'Theophrastus and Epicurean Physics', in: I. van Ophuijsen and M. van Raalte (eds.), *Theophrastus: Reappraising the Sources*, New Brunswick/London 1997, 333-351 and Sedley 1998, 166ff.

²⁹ See note 13.

god — as the traditional formula emphasises. The perfect tense of *fuit*, however, signals that Lucretius' apotheosis is a special one. Epicurus obviously achieved a godlike status as far as happiness and tranquillity of mind are concerned — that is as far as the human condition can be manipulated positively. Yet Epicurean atomism teaches that nothing that is composed of atoms is immortal. Lucretius makes it clear that Epicurus was a mortal and remained so despite his merits. In book three we are informed about his death and we will be reminded of that as we approach book six. The 'apotheosis' it seems, is not to be taken literally, but the *fuit* is. All that Epicurus can promise in the *Letter to Menoikeus* is (*Ep. Men.* 135 ὥς θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις) that someone who follows Epicurean precepts will live 'as god among men'. All that Lucretius therefore can say is that Epicurus *was* a god during his lifetime.³⁰

The Greek ὥς in the *Letter to Menoikeus* corresponds with Lucretius' *fuit*. Epicurus lived *as* a god, whose 'self' remained mortal though he brought this mortal self to perfection. This has been interpreted as one proof that Lucretius was writing against the background of a renewed interest in Euhemeran theology. I do not wish to deny that the passage can be read that way. But I do wish to propose that there is another option. The context of book five as a whole and Lucretius' hint at the beginning suggests to me that we could also read the proem against the background of the tradition of the Platonic *homoiosis* concept and the choice of lives it offers: either to make the immortal part your true self — which at least gives one the chance of becoming immortal — or to concentrate on the mortal part, developing it and bringing it to perfection. Of course, Epicurus voted for the latter: he made the mortal soul his true self. Lucretius' apotheosis as 'deus mortalis' signals that he did this successfully. Seen in this context it turns out that Lucretius' '*deus ille fuit*' is more than a traditional topos and more than a literary game. If one takes Lucretius' learned allusion to the *Laws* literally and compares the two passages, it becomes clear that Lucretius confronts us with a choice of life which is different from Plato's concentration on νοῦς as the potentially important element in us.

³⁰ Epicurus as *deus mortalis*, cf. V 8; III 1042; VI 7f.; see Gale 1994, 79. Plato of course, has more to offer: thanks to the immortal part of the soul, man can - at least theoretically - become θεῖος already during lifetime, if he succeeds in getting close to the ideas, by which even the gods receive their divine status (cf. *R.* 500b-d; Clem. Al., *Strom.* IV 155, 1-4 = 130.2 Dörrie and Baltes τὸν οὖν ἀοράτου θεοῦ θεωρητικὸν θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ζῶντα εἶρηκεν) and the comments in V 311.

2.0. This brings us to the question whether there is a similar contrast when we consider the means which enabled Epicurus to achieve his 'divine' status: Plato's legislator in the *Laws*, who plays a role similar to that of the demiurge in the *Timaeus*, bestows order upon the world, applies measure and limits in order to control the affections, and approaches the gods with pure opinion. How about our '*deus mortalis*' Epicurus? What did he do in order to care for his mortal self in order to become like god?

I want to argue that the 'imitation', which we observed in dealing with the goal of life, is also to be recognised if one considers the means by which he achieved this aim. We recall that in book five Epicurus is also presented as a kind of *nomothetes*, who knows how the cosmos works and how human nature has to be dealt with.³¹ And we remember that Plato wants us to fulfil three conditions if we wish to become like god: to engage in the *theoria* of nature — that is, analyse the causes of things; to control our affections by means of the measure that comes from god; to worship god through achieving a certain character (καθαρὸς τὴν ψυχὴν).

When we read Lucretius' proem, we learn that obviously Epicurus also obeyed three prescriptions:

- a) he listened to nature and interpreted it rightly;
- b) he knows how to control the emotions, using measure and limits as criteria;
- c) he approached the gods with a pure soul, for he did not project false opinion upon the conception of them.

Let us have a closer look at each of these conditions.

2.1. The first reason which Lucretius mentions for ascribing divinity to Epicurus is that he discovered the majesty of things: *cognita maiestas rerum*.

'For if we should speak in the way that the discovered majesty of these things actually requires, he was a god, a god, noble Memmius, who first found out that principle of life, which now is called wisdom, and who by his skill saved *life* from high seas and thick darkness'.³² I side with Martin Smith and Tony Long in their view that here the word *res* is to be understood as 'nature' rather than as 'truth' as

³¹ Cf. Furley 1978, 8.

³² Lucr. V 9ff. *qui princeps vitae rationem invenit eam quae/nunc appellatur sapientia, quique per artem/fluctibus e tantis vitam tantisque tenebris/ in tam tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit.*

Bailey suggests.³³ Second I part from Bailey and most others who take *vita* to mean ‘our’ life. It is not clear to me at all whether the *vita* Epicurus is said to have saved was *our* life, rather than his own life in the first instance. I think Monica Gale is right, that this ambiguity is deliberate.³⁴

Lucretius confesses that Epicurus’ discoveries and the *cognita maiestas rerum* required him (*dicendum*) to award Epicurus with a godlike status. This makes it look as if Lucretius just follows the rule of θεοπρέπεια, known to us since Xenophanes (frg. 26) and used by many other poets as well as discussed by Philodemus in *De pietate*.³⁵ According to this rule the object dealt with determines the style of the words that are being used to talk about this object. We remember that an important *tenet* of Epicurus’ doctrine is his ‘discovery’ that no god is in charge of nature. *Natura* for Epicurus — as Lucretius presents him — is a reality which can be reduced to a self-contained causal system and is the object of rational understanding. From this I draw the conclusion: it cannot be the subject *natura* itself which forces Lucretius to talk about him like a god and which earned Epicurus the title ‘godlike’, but the way Epicurus’ approached it — his interpretation or rather his *theoria* of *natura* which of course shows that nature has nothing to do with the gods.

That is what Epicurean *theoria* is for: to see the facts of *natura* as they are and to analyse their causes without infecting our concepts with wrong presuppositions.³⁶ This attitude frees one from wrong opinions about things and provides the *ataraxia* which follows from purification of the mind. A *theoria* like this creates happiness: ‘in philosophy enjoyment keeps pace with knowledge’ (trans. Long).³⁷ Scientific *theoria* therefore — understood as a search for causes — contains pleasure in itself and helps to achieve a godlike status, which only differs from that of the gods with respect to immortality.³⁸

³³ M.F. Smith, *Lucretius, De reum natura*. With an English translation by W.H.D. Rouse. Revised by M.F. Smith, Cambridge 1975; and Long 1997, 134.

³⁴ Cf. Gale 1994, 79.

³⁵ Cf. H. Reiche, ‘Myth and Magic in Cosmological Polemics: Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius’, *RhM* 114 (1971) 296-329, esp. 307 and note 28; D. Obbink, ‘How to Read Poetry about Gods’, in: D. Obbink (ed.), *Philodemus and Poetry*, Oxford 1995, 189-209, esp. 205f.

³⁶ Cf. Epicur., *Ep. Hdt.* 35; *Pyth.* 116; *Men.* 128; cf. Cic., *Fin.* I 63: *omnium autem rerum natura cognita levamur superstitione*.

³⁷ As *Gnomologium Vaticanum* 27 stresses: ἐπὶ δὲ φιλοσοφίας συντρέχει τῇ γνώσει τὸ τερπνόν, engl. transl.: Long 1997, 129.

³⁸ Cf. Cic., *N.D.* II 153.

Lucretius' praise of Epicurus' *reperta* or *inventa* (3, 9) that are sought out by his own mind (vgl. 5, 5) signals that *theoria* stands for an activity. It gives the impression of a rather traditional³⁹ praise of Epicurus as a *πρῶτος εὐρετής*. But I wish to recall as well that Lucretius ascribes to Epicurus what Epicurus himself demands in the letter to Herodotus: to use lessons taught by the environment and to add discoveries of one's own: *δίδαξις* and *προσεξευρεῖν* belong together.⁴⁰ Epicurean *theoria* (ἡ περὶ φύσεως θεωρία),⁴¹ which concerns not only the gods, but *natura* as a whole, consist of two components:

- a) looking at nature, part of which is the gods; and
- b) analysing and interpreting what one sees: *species* and *ratio naturae*, as Lucretius calls it.

It is interesting that — if one neglects the teleological aspect — this matches what the Stoic Epictetus postulates as well, when he says that god did not bring man into the world only to look at the world, but also to interpret it.⁴² This sort of contemplation of *natura* is an important part of Epicurean philosophy, and as we learn from Lucretius, it has to be a major activity, if one strives to become a god.⁴³ This aspect of *homoiosis* is interesting, because, I think, it is more specific than the general invitation to imitate and contemplate god, which one comes across in other Epicurean texts. To realise this it might be helpful if we compare this Epicurean *theoria* with Plato's word in the *Timaeus*. We saw that here *theoria* figures as the major condition for the Platonic assimilation to god.

Yet there are two differences:

- a) Plato wants man to contemplate nature and to search for the causes of the *phenomena* as the Epicureans are asked to do. But the Platonic *theoria* aims at an intelligible structure behind nature, which gives order to the movements of the soul and allows its immortal part to 'fly to god'. This sort of *theoria* of nature forces us to penetrate the surface of nature. The Epicurean *theoria* however analyses laws within nature. It follows that the Epicurean *homoiosis theoi* does not mean

³⁹ Cf. E., *Ba.* 274ff.; for Prodicus see A. Henrichs, 'The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion: Prodicus as Spiritual Father of the Isis Aretalogies', *HSPH* 88 (1984) 139-158; for Euhemeristic ideas: Gale 1994, 75ff.

⁴⁰ Cf. Epicur., *Ep. Hdt.* 75; Furley 1978, 10f.; cf. Us. 489 = *ad Marcellam* 30, 209, 12 Nauck.

⁴¹ Cf. Epicur., *Ep. Hdt.* 35; *Pyth.* 86. 116; *Men.* 128.

⁴² Cf. Epict., *diss.* I 6, 19-20 καὶ οὐ μόνον θεατὴν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξηγητὴν αὐτῶν. M. Forschner, *Die Stoische Ethik*, Darmstadt 1995², 257.

⁴³ Cf. Lucr., I 146-148; II 59-61.

transcending nature but stands for an assimilation to it: *homoiosis theoi* becomes *ὁμοίωσις φύσει*. For that reason, I cannot see a tension between the “perspective of nature and the theological perspective”.⁴⁴ As we have noticed, to live like god for the Epicureans does not mean to leave mortality behind, but rather to perfect our mortality.

b) The second difference is the following: we remember that Plato wants us to concentrate on the immortal soul and to pursue reason and use *theoria* to achieve immortality. We also recall that the Epicureans voted for the second option: to strive for the perfection of the mortal self. Lucretius does not deny that *theoria* is useful, but he applies it to achieve a different — un-Platonic — aim: the perfection of the mortal self. The Epicurean *theoria* tries — I am quoting Long⁴⁵ — “to integrate knowledge of nature’s procedure with his subjective identity”. Whereas Plato recommends *theoria* only as a means for the soul to achieve immortality, the Epicureans employ *theoria* to bring their mortal self to perfection — because as they claim, a proper understanding of nature produces a mental state, a *διόθεσις*, that seems to be similar to the nature that is enjoyed by the gods.

This brings about — as a kind of corollary — a third difference: the *theoria* Plato is looking for is not to be achieved by everyone. Only the happy few can recognize the ideal structure which lies behind nature:⁴⁶ Platonic philosophers, who are able to transcend the boundaries of nature and who have a glimpse of the idea of the good, which — if not impossible for man — it is however most difficult even for them to achieve. On the other hand, Epicurus strongly believes that everyone and every age should philosophise, because everybody can understand the basic rules of nature as explained by his doctrine, which frees one from fear and provides *eudaimonia*.⁴⁷ I shall come back to that difference shortly. At present I only want to issue a reminder that *theoria* remains an important condition of *homoiosis*, but that the method of *theoria* has changed its aim: as a means for

⁴⁴ As M.C. Nussbaum in her book *The Therapy of Desire*, Princeton 1994, 214f. seems to believe. I wonder whether this position does not mean to read Platonic ideas into the Epicurean *homoiosis* concept.

⁴⁵ Long 1997, 133.

⁴⁶ Cf. Pl., *R.* 500c. *Ekloge* as part of dialectic rules; cf. M. Erler, ‘Anagnorisis in Tragödie und Philosophie’, *WJA* 18 (1992) 147-170, esp. 158ff.

⁴⁷ Cf. Epicur., *Ep. Men.* 122: divine *ataraxia* is within the reach of all men of every age; cf. Lucr., III 322; III 18-24. This significant Epicurean position is even recognised by Raffael who in the *School of Athens* makes this the distinctive mark of an Epicurean group cf. M. Erler, ‘Epikur in Raffaels Schule von Athen’, in: M. Erler (ed.), *Epikureismus in der späten Republik und der Kaiserzeit*, Stuttgart 2000, 273-294.

achieving *homoiosis theoi* it is transferred from the immortal self of the Platonic soul to the mortal soul of the Epicurean man. For it now contributes to the perfection of one's *mortal* self.

2.2. Let us proceed to the second condition for the perfection of the Epicurean self: moral *praxis*. Lucretius asks his reader to purify his heart. He who is able to get rid of *cuppedines*, *superbia*, *spurcitia*, *petulantia*, *luxus* and *desidia*e by means of words 'shall this man not rightly be found worthy to rank among the gods (5, 51)?' Again, Lucretius demands that one has to listen to nature to achieve this aim, "which", to quote David Furley, "speaks with an Epicurean accent".⁴⁸

To handle one's emotions in the right way: this is what Epicurus did and what is expected from everyone who wishes to bring his mortal self to perfection. In book three Lucretius assures the reader that desires and emotions like anger belong to those first traces (*vestigia*) in human nature, which cannot be 'plucked out by the roots' (3, 310 *nec radicitus evelli mala posse putandumst*).⁴⁹ However he also affirms that these traces don't hinder men from living a life worthy of gods (3, 322 *hunc hominem numero divum dignari esse*). The only thing he has to do is to make use of the right criteria to deal with them. The right criteria for dealing with them properly are measure and limit. This is why time and again Lucretius warns the reader that it would bring back misery 'not to know what can be and what cannot, and in what way each thing had its power limited, and its deep set boundary stone'.⁵⁰ It is therefore important to be familiar with the limits of things, which help to estimate what happens to him, and to see what things really are. For it is necessary to distinguish which of the contingent accidents are useful and which really are harmful for one's own self. The moral treatises of Philodemus illustrate how for instance anger, wealth or glory are valued according to their participation in limit and measure. Since Epicurus obviously presupposes 'that the μέτρον ἐν φύσει' (transl. Annas)⁵¹ and can be

⁴⁸ Furley 1978, 9.

⁴⁹ Cf. Lucr., V 307ff., 320f. *usque adeo naturarum vestigia linqui/ parvola, quae nequeat ratio depellere nobis*.

⁵⁰ Lucr., V 88f. *ignari quid queat esse/ quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique/ qua nam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens*; cf. I 74-77; I 595f.; VI 64f. Cf. Ph. De Lacy, 'Limit and Variation', *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 104-113. About measure cf. *KD* V XXV; *Gnom. Vat.* 25.

⁵¹ J. Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, Oxford 1993, 191 note 17.

recognised by men, rational observation and analysis of nature — *theoria* — transmits the knowledge of limit and measure. This helps them to avoid superstition, but also enables them to deal with affections properly.⁵² All that counts is the right interpretation of nature with the help, for instance, of the ἐπιλογισμός, a method to test either opinions concerning physical theory or to prove ethical judgements by studying human behaviour or attitudes in order to draw conclusions about the quality of the judgement or feeling that leads to these attitudes. Happiness consists in the ability of the soul to identify limits for the *phenomena*, which are in accordance with nature. This makes our disposition godlike and shows that it is not the case that we must lack happiness because we are mortal.⁵³

Theoria and moral *praxis* are therefore closely connected: in Epicurean theory they both serve to care for the mortal self and its desires; *theoria* of nature provides the means that have to be used in moral action. They both helped Epicurus to become a *deus mortalis* and will help everybody who strives to become an Epicurean sage. We should remember that the importance of measure as a means for achieving *homoiosis theoi* was emphasised for the first time in the *Laws*. And again we recall the difference: Platonic measure is not to be discovered in nature but by transcending nature. Whereas for Epicurus, I think, it can be recognised by evidence, for Plato it requires a tiresome dialectical process, which of course can be practised only by philosophers.

2.3. We now come to the third condition in Lucretius' proem to book five: the piety towards the gods. Lucretius mentions twice the *pectus purum* or *purgatum* of Epicurus (5, 18. 43), his pure mind, which he holds responsible for Epicurus' perfection of his self. He warns the reader (*Ep. Men.* 123) not to forget the right opinions about the gods (5, 82), because otherwise he will fall back into superstition and will be unhappy (6, 86). Philodemus in *De pietate*

⁵² Cf. Lucr., VI 64-66; *KD* XV, Us. 468. 469. 471.

⁵³ Cf. Diog. Oen. 125 IV 4f. M.F. Smith; cf. Us. 548 καὶ διάθεσις ψυχῆς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ὀρίζουσα. For *epilogismos* see D. Sedley, 'Epicurus, On Nature Book XXVIII', *CErc* 3 (1973) 5-83; M. Schofield, 'Epilogismos: An Appraisal', in: M. Frede and G. Striker (eds.), *Rationality and Greek Thought*, Oxford 1996, 221-237; for the relation between Epicurean *epilogismos* and Epicurean use of literature, cf. M. Erler, 'Exempla furoris. Epicurean *epilogismos* or why the Epicureans read literature morally' (forthcoming).

confirms⁵⁴ that the Epicurean concept of piety focuses on 'thinking rightly' about the gods, without attributing any form of care for human affairs to them as others do, for instance Plato or Theophrastus.

It is not the act of worship which the Epicureans think is wrong, but the motive for it. Piety consists in the calm contemplation of the gods as they really are, who in turn contribute to our *ἀταραξία* by providing us with an example of perfect tranquillity itself that is productive of the greatest pleasure.⁵⁵ Lucretius (5, 1193ff.), it is true, doesn't seem to reflect the religious *praxis* of an Epicurean community.⁵⁶ But he sticks to what is important in Epicurean religion: that the real addressee of piety is the worshipper and that piety is a way to concentrate on and to care for one's own mortal self.

Now, as we have seen, Plato in the *Laws* also demands that we think rightly about the gods. Of course, Plato connects this behaviour with the expectation of a positive reaction from the gods. But despite the differences the components of this theory could enable the Epicureans to realise 'Platonische Ingredienzien' in what they mean; they could develop their own conception from a Platonic basis even here. In both systems right opinions are fundamental for friendship with the gods, assimilation to them, and *eudaimonia*.⁵⁷ All that counts is the disposition of man and his opinion about the gods, because this helps to imitate the god and to achieve *ataraxia* and happiness.

III

1. Let us pause for a moment and look back. We have seen that Plato's prescriptions are meant to serve the care of the immortal self and to contribute to the plan of the demiurge to make the world as good as possible. The soul's capacity to pattern itself on a divine

⁵⁴ Phld., *Piet.*, col. 40, 1138ff. Obbink; cf. Phld., *Piet.* 1138, 1147-55 Obbink and D. Obbink 1996, 482ff., cf. V 1198-1203; cf. Lucr., V 1198-1203; VI 60ff.; cf. Cic., *N.D.* I 116, Epict., *Ench.* 31; for Theophrastus cf. *De piet.* fr. 8, 18-19 Pötscher = fr. 584 D, 20-21 Fortenbaugh.

⁵⁵ About pictures and *exempla* as meditative devices in Epicureanism, cf. Frischer 1982; M. Erler, 'Einübung und Anverwandlung. Reflexe mündlicher Meditations-technik in philosophischer Literatur der Kaiserzeit', in: W. Kullmann, J. Althoff and M. Asper (eds.), *Gattungen wissenschaftlicher Literatur in der Antike*, Tübingen 1998, 361-381 with further references.

⁵⁶ Cf. Clay 1986, 27.

⁵⁷ Cf. Schmid 1951, 105ff.; cf. Phld., *D.* III col. 1, 14, p. 16 Diels.

mind therefore reflects the teleological structure of the world. The Epicurean perfection of the mortal self however is not part of a teleological world plan, but it aims at personal happiness alone. This shift of focus, I think, is well illustrated by what has been called ‘the flight of the mind’ which enables Epicurus’ mind ‘to pass on far beyond the fiery walls of the world, and in mind and spirit traverse the boundless whole’.⁵⁸ It is not surprising to find this topos in Plato’s philosophy: he expects the immortal soul to fly back to the intelligible home (*Phdr.* 249c). However, taken literally, it is surprising to find this topos in an Epicurean context. For it clearly contradicts Epicurean psychology.⁵⁹ Nevertheless it also occurs in a text of Metrodoros as well, where he talks about contemplating nature.⁶⁰ By contemplating nature, he says, man can ‘go up’ to eternity, although he is of mortal nature (ἀνέβης). The ‘flight of the mind’ has actually become a metaphor, illustrating a disposition of the Epicurean self, which is the result of *theoria* and allows man to overview things to assess phenomena correctly. Cicero, in his *Lucullus* (*Luc.* 128. 150), shows that the passage about *homoiosis theoi* in the *Timaeus* was read metaphorically in exactly that way. He paraphrases our chapter in the *Timaeus: contemplatio naturae* nurtures the soul (*quasi pabulum*, vgl. *Tim.* 90c), so that we seem to be elevated: *erigimur, altiores fieri videmur*. The metaphor ‘flight of the mind’ therefore stands for a disposition, which enables us to deal with the phenomena properly in order to gain *ataraxia*. The Stoics too not only used this metaphor, but gave it a name: they called this disposition *magnitudo animi* or μεγαλοφροσύνη.⁶¹ It is interesting that *megalophrosyne* also belongs to the catalogue of epithets of the gods that Epicureans are expected to have ‘on the lips’, in order to remember what to imitate about the gods and what to strive for.⁶² The ‘flight of the mind’ of Epicurus

⁵⁸ Cf. *Lucr.* I 62-79; II 1044ff.

⁵⁹ Cf. D. Furley, *Cosmic Problems*, Cambridge 1989, 180.

⁶⁰ fig. 37 Körte = GV 10, cf. P. Hadot, *Philosophie als Lebensform*, Berlin 1991, 79ff.

⁶¹ *SVF* III 264 = Stob., *Ecl.* II 60, 9 W.; Sen., *Nat.* I 6, *Ep.* 117.19; cf. Dyck 1981; for the Epicureans see Frischer 1982, 241ff.

⁶² Cf. *Phld.*, *Piet.* 1288f. Obbink, also Obbink 1996, 503; cf. *Phld.*, *De Epic.* fr. 6 col. 1, 16-17; see also *PHerc.* 1251 [Philodemus, On choices and avoidances], col. XIV Indelli/Tsouana-McKirahan. This is what Lucretius is aiming at as disposition of his reader cf. G.B. Conte, *Genres and Readers. Lucretius. Love Elegy, Pliny's Encyclopaedia*, Baltimore/London 1994; Erler 1997, 81; cf. Frischer 1982, 199-282; cf. R.J. Newman, ‘*Cotidie meditare*. Theory and Practice of the *meditatio* in Imperial Stoicism’, *ANRWII* 36. 3, 1989, 1473-1517, esp. 1486 note 30; cf. Sen., *Ep.* 107, 7.

illustrates the perfection of his mortal self, which Epicurus achieved by *theoria*, by moral *praxis* and by piety. The *magnitudo animi* of Epicurus equals him to the gods and invites the reader to imitate him as a godlike exemplum of right behaviour. This brings us back to the proem and to discussing some literary and philosophical implications of our analysis.

2. Epicurus, the 'mortal self' par excellence: of course it would be possible for Memmius to read this proem as a traditional encomium about someone who was beneficial to mankind, and rivals or even outdoes the heroic deeds of Hercules, or the inventions of Ceres and Bacchus by his *inventa*.⁶³ The philosophical reader might recall the Stoic wise man or the Euhemeristic hero, who provides mankind with all sorts of benefits and in return for that will be deified. On the other hand, both Memmius and the philosophical reader will have learnt by now that a god who is beneficial to mankind is contrary to Epicurean thought. Epicurean gods do not care for humans.

I would like to remind the reader that Epicurus is presented as benefactor indeed, but he seems to be beneficial to himself in the first place. He is awarded a godlike status, because he successfully concentrated on caring for his own mortal self with the help of *theoria*, moral *praxis* and piety in order to achieve *ataraxia* and *eudaimonia*. As Gale rightly observes "it is *above all* his own achievement of *ataraxia* and only *secondarily* the fact that he enables others to achieve it, which earned him the title of *deus*".⁶⁴ We already mentioned the deliberately ambiguous use of *vita* in verse 12 of book five, which signals that Epicurus himself could be meant as well as other persons. Contrary to what one would expect from an encomium, the aretology of Epicurus comes down to a catalogue of benefits which Epicurus provided for himself. It was only secondarily that he cared for others, by teaching them by his own example what to do.

Yet exactly what seems to undermine the common use of the traditional encomium makes it an appropriate Epicurean praise of a godlike man: because the Epicurean gods also care for their own selves in the first place. They likewise engage in both *theoria* and moral practice, though the latter 'without distress' (ἀνευ ὀχλήσεως),

⁶³ This reference to Hercules does not necessarily point to Stoic background (J. Schmid, *Lukrez, der Kepos und die Stoiker*, Frankfurt am Main 1990, 161ff., against Sedley 1998, 75 and note 62).

⁶⁴ Gale 1994, 79.

in order to preserve their immortal selves. But behaving that way they are said to give an example and therefore help, at least in an indirect way, others who strive for a godlike disposition and for *eudaimonia*. This is why Philodemus can say that the gods ‘not only preserve themselves, but also save others’. For, as he says elsewhere, it helps to imitate the disposition (*diathesis*) of the gods.⁶⁵

What is true about Epicurean gods is true also about an Epicurean wise man who has already achieved the status of a *deus mortalis*. He helps others too by taking care of his own mortal self by *theoria* and *praxis*, because he exerts influence on people as long as their condition allows for that, in that he gives an example which might help common man to become a *deus mortalis* like Epicurus himself. *Homoiosis theoi* becomes ὁμοίωσις σοφῶ. Since Epicurus indeed has become an Epicurean sage, who — to quote Philodemus’ *De pietate* — ‘obviously succeeded in *imitating* the blessedness of the gods in so far as mortals can’, he might function as an *exemplum* to be imitated by others.⁶⁶

Exempla play an important role in transmitting knowledge in Epicureanism. They are meant to encourage and to instruct, in that they enable men to achieve *ataraxia* by focusing on how to behave. For *exempla* served as a means to internalise Epicurean doctrine. Philodemus reminds us that this kind of illustration forms part of the ἐπιλογισμός which in *ethical contexts* is used frequently by Epicureans to study one’s own behaviour and that of others. Seneca’s exclamation: *simus inter exempla* (*Ep.* 98.13) describes well what the Epicureans practised.⁶⁷ That might be one reason why Lucretius composed an encomium about Epicurus the way he did in book five. Many other passages in Lucretius’ poem also show that Lucretius wants philosophy to become useful for the reader in order to support him in his desire to be happy. That is to say, the poem itself is meant to support its reader in the desire to achieve μεγαλοψυχία and to become like god. The encomium of Epicurus, who successfully strove for *homoiosis theoi*, is part of that endeavour. After all, the topos of *nil admirari* as applied to the *megalopsychos* already occurs in Aristotle, and is the basis for the Stoic view of external goods, but looms large in *De rerum natura* as well.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Cf. Schmid 1951, 142.

⁶⁶ Cf. Phld., *Piet.* 2043ff. Obbink.

⁶⁷ Cf. Sen., *Ep.* 11.8ff.

⁶⁸ Cf. Arist., *EN* 1125a2-3; see Dyck 1981, 156; D. Clay, *Lucretius and Epicurus*,

3. Of course to present Epicurus as a perfected mortal self can also be interpreted as an attack on rival schools. It can be understood as rejecting positions like that of the Stoics,⁶⁹ who were indeed sceptical about the possibility of humans achieving divine knowledge, and I do not wish to deny that they might be a target. However I would prefer rather to think here of the Platonic tradition as well, for two reasons:

a) To present the reader with an example of a godlike, wise man, and to let the reader know that everyone can achieve this ideal, contradicts what Plato and his followers propagated. They differ strongly from Epicurus, who claims that everyone can listen to the voice of nature and that the godlike status is within the grasp of men.

b) To present a perfected *mortal* self as an *example* to be *imitated* was obviously to take a stance on an issue that was controversial between the schools. Plato and his pupils did not accept that *homoiosis* of a mortal σοφός can be as useful as *homoiosis theoi* for achieving moral excellence. As Plato says in the *Laws*: 'Not man, but god is the measure of all things'. Later Platonists followed him in this. For instance the 'anonymous' author of the *Commentary on the Theaetetus* argues that to gain moral virtue man should not emulate, but transcend human nature. *Homoiosis sophoi* is rejected and replaced by *homoiosis theoi* alone.⁷⁰ I think it documents a discussion which went on in the first century BC. And it is worth noting that Plotinus still argues against those who wish to emulate a good man instead of the gods.⁷¹

IV

Let us conclude this discussion about Epicurus, the perfect mortal self and example to be imitated by others, with the following.

I hope a close reading of the proem of book five of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* has shown that this complex and interesting passage should be added to the collection of testimonies — mostly to be

Ithaca/London 1983, 260ff.; Erler 1997, 81ff.

⁶⁹ See Long 1997, 125ff.; 136.

⁷⁰ Cf. Anon., *Commentarius in Platonis 'Theaetetus'* (PBerlo. inv. 9782) ed. G. Bastianini and D.N. Sedley, in: *Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici Greci e Latini (CPF)*. Parte III: Commentari, Firenze 1995, Nr. 9, 227-562, col. VII Bastianini-Sedley.

⁷¹ Cf. Plot. I 2 (19) 7 Henry et Schwyzer, and see L.P. Gerson, *Plotinus*, London/New York 1994, 199ff.

found in Cicero's *philosophica* and well discussed recently by Carlos Lévy⁷² — which document the growing importance of the concept of the *homoiosis theoi* in the theological and ethical discussion of that time. In this paper I wanted to suggest that Lucretius' encomium is to be seen as part of this lively debate. We therefore should reckon with the possibility that Lucretius wishes to take part in the discussion about whether a human might serve as a moral example and therefore exploits echoes of Plato. This does not exclude the possibility that by so doing he also tries to outdo the Stoics.

I think my remarks prove that at least the passage in the *Timaeus* we dealt with was instrumental in the Epicurean 'adoption' and transformation of the Platonic concept of *homoiosis theoi*. It shows how they used components of the Platonic theory for their purpose. They took over the play on words by which Plato illustrates the perfect immortal soul, and transferred it to describe the status of perfection as they see it: the perfect mortal self. This I have tried to illustrate by referring to Lucretius' proem to book five, which I think is to be seen in the context of the theological discussion about the concept of *homoiosis theoi* and how to achieve it. Either his source or Lucretius himself was participating in a lively debate.

Lucretius' verses are an interesting document of the theological debates of that time. This might be regarded as a footnote to what W. Schmid observed, and might help to understand better how the Epicureans filled 'new wine in the old bottle' borrowed from the wine-cellar of the Academy.

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⁷² Cf. Lévy 1990, esp. 64f.

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‘ALL GODS ARE TRUE’ IN EPICURUS

DIRK OBBINK

I. *The Doctrine on Piety according to Epicurus*

When he moved from Lampsacus to Athens and started a school of philosophy there in 306 B.C., Epicurus laid the foundations for modern materialism and physical psychology. He argued for the existence of the divine, but formulated his theology in a way that so shocked contemporaries that it earned him the name of atheist among later philosophers. The exact tenets of Epicurus’ theology have never been conclusively established, for his works on the subject do not survive. The contribution of this paper is to draw attention to its formulation in a neglected passage in Philodemus of Gadara’s treatise on the theological views of Epicurus, *Περὶ εὐσεβείας* (*On Piety*), preserved on a papyrus from the philosophical library recovered from the Villa of the Papyri on the Bay of Naples.¹ Philodemus describes this book in its conclusion as ‘the doctrine (λόγος) on piety according to Epicurus’.² Indeed, Philodemus could read the theological works of Epicurus (now lost to us) and often quotes directly from them.³ As a result, those who purport to interpret Epicurean theology while ignoring Philodemus’ testimony on the subject, do so at their peril.

In the summation of his treatise, Philodemus makes the remarkable claim that unlike the Stoics, who assert the existence of a single,

¹ A new text of the papyrus, based on new readings obtained from digital images captured with the aid of infra-red filters in July 2000, is in the course of publication (OUP), of which I give excerpts below. The majority of improvements involve the minor confirmation of previously suggested supplements and the removal of dots and brackets. However, I indicate below in the notes substantive departures from the previous edition (Henrichs 1974) that affect reading and meaning. I have also restored the original numbers of the columns, as given in the subscription at the end of the papyrus roll.

² Col. 367 lines 20-3 τὸν περὶ τῆς εὐσεβείας λόγον τῆς κατ’ Ἐπικούρου.

³ These include Epicurus’ treatises *On Holiness*, *On Gods*, and book twelve of Epicurus’ magnum opus *On Nature* (see Obbink 1996, 666 for a list of citations). On the theological content of the last (the model for Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* 5, see Sedley 1998, 122-3).

universal divinity, the Epicureans argue that there exist 'not only all the gods of the Greeks, but many more besides'.⁴ Given the strict orthodoxy of the Epicureans, Philodemus cannot be simply putting his own personal spin on the theology of Epicurus: the statement is offered in defence of Epicurus against the charge of atheism, and is intended to clarify Epicurus' position on the nature of the gods' existence. Thus Philodemus is explicit on this point: Epicurus had argued that virtually all gods must in some sense exist, i.e., 'be true'.

But in what sense could this be so? Is the claim not uneconomically odd? On what grounds should all or more conceivable divinities be *a fortiori* preferable to fewer or one? Is Philodemus' claim a serious one,⁵ or simply an act of diplomatic generosity toward the benighted masses, much as the Vatican is currently said to 'acknowledge all world religions'? In either case, it would be badly in need of defence, for it would compromise the very basis of Epicurean materialism.

I argue that Philodemus' account of Epicurus' view on piety coheres closely with one current, controversial view of Epicurean theology, and that it is only understandable within that view. Although it has received both cautious approbation and critical response since its powerful reformulation by A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley in *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (1987), this explanation of Epicurus' theology has not yet received the full hearing it deserves. I adduce below some new evidence in its favour, arguing that the testimony of the later Epicurean writers, especially Philodemus, has been overlooked, for the understanding of Epicurus' original formulation. This view of Epicurus' theology is certainly the one which Philodemus and Lucretius (who could read Epicurus' theological writings) know, and it is consistent with what they have to say elsewhere on this subject.

⁴ Col. 362: ἡμῶν οὐ μόνον ὅσους φασὶν οἱ Πανέλληνες ἀλλὰ καὶ πλείονας εἶναι λεγόντων (P.Herc. 1428 col. 10 lines 25-9). For the full context see Text 10a below; and cf. Mansfeld 1999, 456 where the titles of the works in question (*On Gods* and *On Piety*) are unfortunately missing from their quotations.

⁵ In Cicero's adaptation of Philodemus' treatise at *De nat. deor.* I 25-43, for example, the Epicurean spokesman Velleius is made to deny the existence not only of the gods of popular belief, of the Egyptians and other foreign peoples, but also those of the Stoics, Platonists and Peripatetics, and of the pre-Socratics from Thales to Diogenes of Apollonia.

II. *The Theology of Materialism*

Briefly and uncontroversially stated, this explanation of Epicurus' theology is the proposition that for Epicurus nothing is so important about the gods as our correct thinking about them. It is for our own ideas that the gods have the greatest consequences, since according to Epicurus the gods, being perfect, never have any intervention in or direct contact with our imperfect world, as they would be spoiled by its imperfections if they did. It therefore must be that our ideas about the gods (and not any other extra-cosmic physical or perceptual processes) facilitate and structure for us the very existence of the divine.

In a somewhat stronger (yet in my view equivalent) formulation, this explanation holds that according to Epicurus the gods are merely our ideas of them, noetic entities or the 'thought-constructs' of human beings — each god a projection of an individual person's own ethical ideals. Every person has a prolepsis of blessed and immortal gods which, by a process of transition using received images (*eidola*, εἰδωλα) of human forms, becomes a reality — in one's mind. And although gods have reality only within the mind according to this theology, Epicurus nevertheless claimed that his theology was not atheistic, and he urged his followers to refine their culturally received ideas of the gods so as to recover the original, unacculturated prolepsis of them, and to contemplate and to worship their thought-constructed gods and to demonstrate their piety by participating in public religious festivals.

This view differs from rival views of Epicurus' theology as regards the nature, place, and manner of the gods' existence. Do the gods exist as discrete, spatial entities, living a biological existence somewhere outside the cosmos, from where their images perpetually travel? Or are they a special class of entities, materially caused and psychologically perpetuated products of our own mental processes? The existence of the gods as independent physical entities apart from our ideas of them is thus an issue of the highest importance. Denial of such independently existing biological beings would bring Epicurus close to the heresy of atheism, while the acceptance of extra-cosmic, supernatural forces would threaten the basis of his physical system.

III. *The Evidence of Philodemus' On Piety*

The structure of the evidence for Epicurus' theology and its state of preservation does not allow us to reconstruct his theological system inductively by simply amassing its remains. Nor will it do to construct a just-so story, establishing its points selectively by drawing on the amalgam of our scattered evidence, wherever it happens to fit a desired interpretation and conveniently ignoring it when it does not. Instead I attempt to establish the epistemological basis offered by Epicurus for belief in the gods, as represented by Philodemus in the passages below from *On Piety* (especially Texts 10-11). These present Epicurean theology overtly contrasted with what Philodemus takes to be the monotheism of orthodox Stoicism.⁶ By contrast it portrays as Epicurus' view the position that all gods have some basis in truth, and by implication describes the conditions in the Epicurean universe that make the existence of such entities (otherwise threatening to any materialist system) possible.

First it is necessary to set the crucial passages from Philodemus' *On Piety* in their proper context. *On Piety* is the best known of the works from the philosophical library recovered at Herculaneum. It consists of two parts, both responses to a Stoic critique of Epicurean theology. The first is a defence of Epicurean religious ideas and practice;⁷ the second is a catalogue of false views of the poets and rival philosophers (discussed below).⁸ The treatise was one of the earliest of the Herculaneum scrolls to be opened and unrolled, the second or third of the works to be identified. But a complete edition has been delayed by hundreds of years. Editorial progress has been impeded by

⁶ Mansfeld 1999, 462, levels against Philodemus the charge of forgetting that Stoic theology was pantheistic. But Philodemus merely argues that anyone can see that entities like sandbanks and thistledown are devoid of divinity, so that Stoic claims for pantheistic divinity must be reducible to a single cosmic principle, worshipable by no one, and so worthless for religion. The validity of this claim is not in itself decisive for my argument that Philodemus characterises Stoicism as essentially monotheistic in order to define Epicurean theology as psychologically accommodating all conceivable divinities.

⁷ New edition: Obbink 1996.

⁸ New edition forthcoming (see n. 1). For previous editions of the section on poets see Schober 1988; pre-Socratics: Gomperz 1866, 62-73; except for Democritus and Prodicus for which see Henrichs 1975; Diogenes of Apollonia: Laks 1983; and Speusippus: Tarán 1981. For the critique of the Stoics: Henrichs 1974. But see the new Texts 8-11 below.

its state of conservation and preservation, and also by its style. It would be difficult to integrate into our picture of Hellenistic theology even if it had come down to us in perfect condition. Anyone who has tried to work with the evidence of Philodemus preserved in the Herculaneum scrolls has been confronted with the same sickening and familiar story. According to one modern scholar, "the enormous amount of labour that has to be invested to get anything out of the skimpy texts is rather daunting. Philodemus' polemic is often cheap, his range of reference and image limited, his own ideas often jejune, and the difficulty in separating his views from those he cites, and polemic from quotation, is very off-putting."⁹ In what follows I shall try to rehabilitate Philodemus from this damning indictment.

IV. *The Quellenkritik of Cicero, De natura deorum I*

When Cicero came to write his great history of theology in *De natura deorum* (I 25-43) he turned for a model not to earlier accounts by Aristotle or Theophrastus, nor to the encyclopedic work of his contemporary Varro, nor any work of his own Academy, but rather to his philosophical opponents, the Epicureans. It is very likely that Cicero had polemical reasons for doing so, namely to show the Epicureans to be even more biased and deficient historians of theology than they appeared to be in their own works. But his choice, we now know, was at least in part due to his familiarity with a comprehensive discussion by a contemporary acquaintance, the Epicurean Philodemus, house-philosopher of his great enemy, the Caesarian Calpurnius Piso.

The speed at which Cicero composed his philosophical works necessitated that he worked largely from the works of others, using some here and others there, augmenting and adapting them to his own purpose. On 16 August 45 BC Cicero, busy at work on *De natura deorum*, wrote to Atticus asking him to send post haste two books, the titles of which have been mutilated in the manuscripts, but which are now generally agreed by editors to be the *Περὶ θεῶν* of the Epicurean Phaedrus and the famous book *Περὶ τῆς Ἀθηνῆς* by the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon:

⁹ Glenn W. Most by private communication.

Text 1

Cic. *Att.* XIII 39.2: libros mihi de quibus ad te antea scripsi velim mittas et maxime Φαίδρου Περὶ θεῶν et <Διογένους Περὶ Shackleton Bailey> Παλλάδος.¹⁰

We might be tempted to think that we get here a transparent glimpse into Cicero's methods of research as he consulted original source material for his dialogues, and that one or both of the works mentioned had ultimately provided Cicero directly with his history of theology in *De natura deorum* I. For the second book mentioned is actually cited and quoted at I 41 (= Text 8b below). Yet matters are not so simple. Even if we did not happen to possess Philodemus' *On Piety*, we would know that this was wrong. On the day before (15 August 45) Cicero says (*Att.* XIII 38.1) that he was already writing *contra Epicureos*, indicating that he had already finished the pro-Epicurean section of *De natura deorum* (the first part consisting of a succession of false theological views from Thales to Diogenes of Babylon), and begun Cotta's refutation of it.¹¹

Thanks to the discovery of a philosophical library in a large aristocratic villa at Herculaneum on the Bay of Naples, we can now confidently say that Cicero followed Philodemus' Περὶ εὐσεβείας for the main history of theology given by Velleius in book one. Sections 25-41 of Cicero's work¹² are translated more or less exactly from the

¹⁰ θεῶν Victorius: οσῶν codd.; <Διογένους Περὶ> Shackleton Bailey; Παλλάδος Orelli; ΠΑΛΙΔΟC PMm; CIAΛΙΑOC R. Shackleton Bailey assures me (*per litteras*) that he considers the correction (printed in the apparatus criticus to his Teubner edition) 'pretty certain'. K. Summers, *CQ* 47 (1997) 309-11 proposes Περὶ ὁσίων for the first title and Περὶ φιλίας for the second; both are palaeographically implausible. Περὶ ὁσίων is unattested as a work on the gods or religion, while Phaedrus is not known to have written on φιλία.

¹¹ Cicero *Att.* XIII 38.1 says that he had been writing against the Epicureans 'before daybreak' (*ante lucem*), and then went to bed again. He must by this time have finished the Epicurean section, for the reason that Cotta's response against the Epicureans, which follows, is a true refutation, following Velleius' positive exposition point for point. For this reason Velleius' pro-Epicurean exposition must have already existed, at least in outline. No doubt Cicero is asking for the books because he wants to check a few things he has already been writing about. Presumably this is why he asked for Diogenes' book, having taken note of it in Philodemus (Text 8b below). It is possible (and fits with the practice of the times) that he first composed a rough sketch or outline or preliminary version, which he later on filled out and polished up. See T. Dorandi, *Le stylet et la tablette* (Paris 2000).

¹² McKirahan 1996, 874; for earlier literature: Henrichs 1974. Cicero's source for the preceding sections 18-25 is unknown.

same text as it appears in Greek in P.Herc. 1428, the conclusion of Philodemus' treatise *On Piety*. Not only do the passages given below (Texts 4-11, below) correspond so closely in the versions of Philodemus and Cicero as to show direct dependence of the latter on the former,¹³ but also the names and the order in which the philosophers from Thales to Diogenes of Babylon are cited is one and the same.¹⁴ The preceding section in Philodemus on the poets is summarised very precursively by Cicero at I 42 (after the philosophers, and not before, as in Philodemus).

In light of the exact correspondences, to posit an unknown common source used each in their own way by Philodemus and Cicero respectively, as some scholars have proposed, would result in multiplying hypotheses unnecessarily and uneconomically.¹⁵ Cicero's borrowing from a work by Philodemus is an understandable one. He was familiar with his poetry and prose treatises (*In Pisonem* 68-72), and had heard lectures by Philodemus and Siro at Naples (Cic. *Luc.* 106, *De fin.* II 119, *Fam.* VI 11.2). For Cicero Philodemus' works were imbued with the authority of his own education, since Philodemus drew largely on the work of his teacher Zeno of Sidon. Cicero himself had heard Zeno lecture in Athens in his school days. Elsewhere (*Att.* XII 52.3) Cicero refers to his philosophical works as 'mere copies' of their Greek originals, although some scholars have understood Cicero's words: ἀπόγραφα sunt, minore labore fiunt; verba tantum adfero quibus abundo ('They are copies. They're no trouble. I just bring the

¹³ Omissions and inaccuracies in Cicero's version are explicable on they hypothesis that he adapted Philodemus' work, whereas it is most implausible that Philodemus, although he probably out-lived Cicero, would in using a Ciceronian original have systematically redressed them and re-consulted original sources without notice.

¹⁴ Re-examination of the papyrus has yielded several new names as well as gaps where the names of several philosophers present in Cicero but previously missing from Philodemus are securely placed. See the list of correspondences below.

¹⁵ For a survey of previous views of the relation between Cicero's and Philodemus' *Philosophenkritik* see A. S. Pease (ed.), *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum Liber Primus*, Cambridge, Mass. 1955, 39-42. Already R. Hirzel, *Untersuchungen zu den philosophischen Schriften Ciceros*, vol. 1 (Leipzig 1877) 42 n. 2 realized that the correspondences between the two texts were sufficiently close to make the hypothesis of a common source superfluous. H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci*, Berlin 1879, perpetuated the view that Philodemus and Cicero both copied from Phaedrus' Περὶ θεῶν or Zeno's Περὶ εὐσεβείας. Cf. R. Philippson, *SymbOslo* 19 (1939) 27-31. A. Henrichs, *GRBS* 13 (1972), 81 n. 37, holds out for the possibility that the Herculaneum papyrus is in fact Phaedrus' Περὶ θεῶν, but this appears to be ruled out by Text 1 and the chronology discussed above.

words, and I've plenty of them') too seriously (i.e., without a hint of false modesty). Shackleton Bailey has suggested that they do not even pertain to the *philosophica*. More trustworthy are Cicero's claims (*De off.* I 6) to follow the Stoics (in that work) not as a mere translator but drawing from Stoic sources as he thinks fit, and (*De fin.* 1. 6) to add his own criticism, *iudicium* and arrangement, *scribendi ordo* to the chosen authority.

This is exactly what one sees in one section of *De natura deorum* (I 25-43).¹⁶ The overlap with the doxographical final section of Philodemus' *On Piety* at once provides conclusive proof for Cicero's direct dependence on the extant Greek work, and a unique opportunity for distinguishing the two works as distinct research projects displaying the peculiarities of their respective authors. The typology of the books of the Herculaneum library contrasts sharply with the publishing ventures of Cicero and Atticus. Cicero's dialogues depict Roman gentlemen engaged in learned yet urbane and witty conversation about the central topics in Greek philosophy of the generation. Philodemus' treatises, on the other hand, promote the Epicurean good life for the benefit of the recalcitrant Piso and his sons. At times concessions are made to the contemporary social and political setting. Philodemus in *On the Good King*, for example, concedes that the study of the Homeric poems may provide a starting point for examining the late Republican ideology of monarchy and the role of personal ethics in it. But some of the treatises take a purely historical bent, the Syntaxes of the Stoic, Academic, and Epicurean schools, for example, which are devoid of polemic and even allow a measure of praise to philosophers of rival schools. In others the sheer learning and cultured expertise that one would expect from a touted house-philosopher who was also a fashionable poet of the day are put on show. In the final two sections of *On Piety* Philodemus gives what is an acknowledged catalogue¹⁷ of citations (one after another, most without the benefit even of direct quotation, and few equipped with commentary) of the views on the gods of the most important poets,

¹⁶ J. Powell, 'Cicero's Translations from the Greek' in id. (ed.), *Cicero the Philosopher*, Oxford 1995, 273-300, oddly does not mention the overlap between Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 25-43 and P.Herc. 1428, Philodemus' *On Piety* II. I have learned much, however, from T. R. Glover, 'Cicero among his Books' in *Springs of Hellas*, Oxford 1945, 131-59 (p. 139 on Philodemus' *On Piety*).

¹⁷ Philodemus calls it a συναγωγή (*De piet.* I in Obbink 1996 line 2341-2). On the use of this term to designate a type of philosophical writing, see M. Gigante, *CErc* 28 (1998), 116.

historians, mythographers, grammarians, and philosophers known to the Greeks. In this case, however, the catalogue is anything but disinterested or purely historical, despite the abbreviated commentary, nor is it purely critical from an Epicurean standpoint (as it is, for example, in Cicero's adaptation). Rather, in *On Piety* we get a repertoire of authorities purportedly cited by Stoics in support of Stoic views, turned back by Philodemus against the Stoics in an attempt to make the Stoics look foolish and self-contradictory in their tenets.¹⁸

V. *The Structure of Philodemus' On Piety*

Philodemus' selection is thus determined by what he sees in his Stoic source as their appropriation (συνουκείωσις, *accommodatio*) of traditional opinions about the gods. This consists of a lengthy catalogue of δόξαι (usually in paraphrase, only rarely with the benefit of direct quotation): it is in two parts, the first treating poets, historians, mythographers, and grammarians as a group, the second summarising philosophers. The subject matter of the poets is initially treated chronologically, beginning with cosmogony, births of gods, etc., then topically, according to the category of impropriety (see Cicero's summary, Text 3b below). For the philosophers, we get a chronological summary of opinions from Thales to Diogenes of Apollonia, and from Xenophon and Plato to Theophrastus; after that Philodemus turns to his real opponents, the Stoics, beginning with Zeno and Cleanthes and moving on through Persaeus to Chrysippus and finally Diogenes of Babylon, the latest philosopher treated, with whom the work ends.

The general table of contents, as it were, of *On Piety*, with their corresponding overlapping sections in Cicero, can be set out schematically as follows:¹⁹

¹⁸ Much the same method can be seen in Galen's casting of hundreds of quotations from poets and philosophers back in the teeth of the Stoics in *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, or in Plutarch's anti-Stoic treatises, as well as Clement's anti-Pagan *Protrepticus*.

¹⁹ I have adjusted Cicero's order to reflect that of the Greek original. The use of capitals (A, B, and C) to designate sections in Cicero is adapted from and corresponds to the discussion in McKirahan 1996.

Philodemus *Περὶ εὐσεβείας*
[no known correspondence]

Cicero, *De natura deorum* I
Proem: 1-17

Part I: Epicurean religion = Obbink 1996 [cf. 43-56: no direct overlap]

[no known correspondence] A: 18-25 Stoics and Platonists

Part I: Opinions

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (a) poets, historians, etc. | C: 42 (summary) |
| (b) philosophers | B: 25-42 |
| (1) Thales to Diog. of Apoll. | (1) 25-9 |
| (2) Plato to Theophrastus | (2) 29-35 |
| (3) Zeno to Diog. of Babylon | (3) 36-41 |
| (c) conclusions about Stoics | [cf. 43 = Text 10b below] |

Cicero makes out that Velleius is giving a straightforward Epicurean version of the history of theology. But Philodemus' significantly different plan and intention are clearly set out at the opening of the second part of *On Piety*:

Text 2

Philod. *De piet.* col. 86:²⁰ [κατάρ]ξομαι δ' ἀπὸ τ[ῶν σεμ]νῶν θεολόγων
[καὶ π]οιητῶν, ἐπει[δὴ μ]άλιστα τούτους [ἐγκω]μιάζουσιν οἱ ¹⁵
[κατ]α[τρ]έχοντες ἡ[μῶ]ν ὡς ἀσεβῆ καὶ [ἀσύ]μφορα τοῖς ἀν[θρώ]ποις
δοματι[ζόν]των.

I shall begin with the self-important²¹ theologians and poets, since they are the ones who are especially praised by those who attack us, on the grounds that we are setting forth views impious and disadvantageous to mankind.

This follows directly on from a discussion that closes the first part of the work (*De piet.* 2082-2450: Obbink 1996, 248-72). The Epicureans, Philodemus complains, are criticised by their opponents because they do not allow the view that the gods punish wrong-doers, in the way traditionally represented. Removing this fear of punishment would allegedly pose a threat to society. Disputing both points, Philodemus announces that he is going to survey 'the theologians and poets especially praised by those who attack us (sc. Epicureans) for setting

²⁰ Lines 2179-89 = P.Herc. 247 fr. 7 + 242 fr. 6 (= Obbink 1996, 276).

²¹ At *De piet.* I 2481 [σεμ]νῶν was restored by Schober 1988, 76, and accepted in Obbink 1996. A. A. Long suggested to me at the Symposium that we might rather supplement [παλ]αίων or [ἀρ]χ[α]ίων here (assuming that the copyist, who alone preserves this fragment, mistook ai for n as he does elsewhere), which would well suit the passages which follow.

forth views impious and disadvantageous to mankind’. The catalogue of poets is then prefaced by a warning to his reader not to expect too much accuracy with regard to names and titles in the citations which follow, ‘lest I seem to have spent much of my time on such matters’ (μὴ φανῶ [τὸν πο]λὺν προσεδρεῦ[σαι] τοιούτοις χρόνον). The disclaimer of responsibility for potential errors in his source (which may have been explicitly acknowledged in the following column, which is missing), together with [ἐγκω]μιάζουσιν, shows that his acquaintance with the quotations of poets in *De pietate* was not at first hand. Rather, many if not all of the citations of the poets criticised by Philodemus could be found compiled in the works of his Stoic opponents. It also shows that his main interest and objective was not simply in a criticism of the poets pronouncements per se (as he is represented by Cicero), but also, perhaps principally, with a refutation of the accommodation by the Stoics of such statements to their own views. The passages in the later section in which Philodemus summarises Stoic views (see below), but stripped of their citations and quotations of the poets, make abundantly clear the interest of the Stoics in this activity.

Cicero, on the other hand, seems to have missed or ignored this aspect of his Epicurean source, preferring to exaggerate and sharpen the level of pure Epicurean criticism he found in it. This misconstrual of the Epicurean handling of the Stoic doxography in *De natura deorum* I 18-43 has led to some distortion in Velleius’ account. Some of the distortion is no doubt due to Cicero’s own polemical strategy. It is now generally agreed that in *De nat. deor.* I 25-43 Cicero intentionally depicts the Epicureans as embarrassed by the inaccuracies of their own polemical version of the history of theology.²²

A single example of Philodemus’ handling of the poets, historians, etc. serves to illustrate his line of approach. Most consist of long strings of short citations with implied criticism. The little commentary is restricted to brief summations of the type of error made by the poet or historian, with a few qualifications and admissions. Most of the criticism is on a fairly elementary grammatical level, chastising the poets etc. as having represented the gods in a matter unbefitting their divinity, as in the following example:

²² Latest treatment: McKirahan 1996.

Text 3a

Philod. *De piet.* col. 199:²³ τὸν [δ'] Ἑρμῆν ὅτι τετρά[γω]νον ἄνωθεν παραδεδώκασιν θεωροῦμεν. καίτοι τὸ ¹⁰ μὲν ἢ γεννηθῆναι τὴν μορφήν ἄτοπον ἢ τῶν μερῶν ὕστερόν τι διςτυχήσαι τὴν κακί¹⁵αν ἐκφεύγειν δύναται, τὸ δὲ [πο]νηροτάτους εἰσάγ[ειν] θεοὺς ἄνωθ[εν] ἐκ γενετῆς ὑπερβολὰς ²⁰ ἔστιν οὐκ ἀπολειπόντων ἀσεβείας. [ἄρ'] οὐχ Ὅμηρος μὲν [Δι]ὸς υἱὸν ὄντα τὸν Ἄ[ρη] καὶ ἄφρονα καὶ ἀ²⁵[θέ]μιστον καὶ μισαῖφονον καὶ φίλεριν καὶ φιλόμαχον εἰσ[ή]γαγεν καὶ καθόλου [τοι]οῦτον οἶον οἱ συν³⁰[γεν]έσται[οι ψ]έγου[σιν];

And we observe that people have always represented Hermes as rectangular (i.e., as a herm). And yet to be born with an odd shape, or suffer mutilation to any of one's parts later, need not involve any wickedness; but to represent the gods as most depraved right from their birth is a sign of those who do not omit any excesses of impiety. Now does Homer not represent Ares, the son of Zeus, as foolish, lawless, murderous, a lover of strife and battle, and generally such a one as his closest relations disparage?

The point is a basic one: such representations are beneath the dignity of divinity. The criterion employed is what is *πρέπον* to say about the gods according to the first of Epicurus' *Kyriai Doxai*. Philodemus' summary dismissal and lengthy cataloguing of the poets' and historians' views can be glimpsed in Cicero's abridged version of this section. In Cicero it comes after the catalogue of philosophers (I 25-41). At I 42 he backtracks briefly to insert a summary, before proceeding with his exposition of Epicurean theology at I 43-56:

Text 3b

Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 42: exposui fere non philosophorum iudicia sed delirantium somnia. nec enim multo absurdiora sunt eas quae poetarum vocibus fusa ipsa suavitate nocuerunt, qui et ira inflammatis et libidine furentis induxerunt deos feceruntque ut eorum bella proelia pugnas vulnera videremus, odia praeterea discidia discordias, ortus interitus, querellas lamentationes, effusas in omni intemperantia libidines, adulteria vincula, cum humano genere concubitus mortalisque ex immortali procreatos.

I have given a résumé of what are not so much the opinions of philosophers as the dreams of madmen. For they are not much less absurd than those which, issuing in the voices of poets, have done harm owing to the very charm of their style. They have represented (*inducere* = εἰσπάγειν) the gods as inflamed by anger and seething with lust, and have portrayed before our eyes their wars, battles, fights, wounds, their hatreds, enmities, and quarrels, their births, deaths, complaints, and mourning, their passions gushing out in every sort of licence,

²³ P.Herc. 1088 fr. 10, lines 5-30 (cf. Schober 1988, 84).

their adulteries, imprisonment in bonds, their sexual affairs with humans, and the birth of human offspring from an immortal parent.

It seems to have largely passed unnoticed that this is in fact a fairly close summary of the objectionable topics under which the citations catalogued by Philodemus are grouped. Now that the correct order of the fragments of Philodemus' treatise have been established, there can even be seen to be some correspondence in the order of the fragments (in particular it is certain that the treatment of adultery, sexual affairs, and mortal offspring come last in Philodemus, as in Cicero's summary). Two major omissions from Cicero's list that I am at a loss to explain are the δουλεία of the gods, which are treated some length by Philodemus, and the cosmogonies, which open the section on poets. Later such summaries became standard in doxographies, partly through Cicero's influence and the authority of *De nat. deor.*: Ax compares e.g. Sallustius 3 Nock ἀλλὰ διὰ τί μοιχείας καὶ κλοπὰς καὶ πατέρων δεσμοὺς καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἀτοπίαν ἐν τοῖς μύθοις εἰρήκασιν. But the ordering of topics confirms here beyond any doubt that Cicero had a copy of Philodemus' work before him.

VI. *Stoic Targets in Philodemus' History of Theology*

When we recall that Philodemus by his own disclaimer has culled these citations not from his own memory, nor from Piso's library, but from the works of his Stoic opponents, the grouping of categories given by Cicero becomes even more relevant. They probably reflect material covered in Diogenes of Babylon's *On Athena*, which I have suggested elsewhere may have been a treatise on psychology rather than theology.²⁴

But Philodemus' approach to his opponents' use of the poets is not exclusively negative and destructive. His consistent procedure is to specify how the poetic δόξα conflicts with the Epicurean conception by depicting the gods as, for example, fighting in battle, engaging in sexual immorality, associating with humans, and so on, thereby isolating what needs to be stripped away in order to arrive at an unadulterated, appropriate conception of divinity.²⁵ The cumulative

²⁴ Obbink 1996, 20 n. 1. It is possible that Cicero was reminded to include this summary of the poets by his mention of Diogenes' *De Minerva* immediately before at I 41.

²⁵ Examples: Obbink 1995, 203-5.

effect of the catalogue is to construct a detailed portrait of the divine by tabulating as many examples as possible of what the gods are most certainly not. In the process he provides what has been termed ‘negative theology’: i.e., a list, in negative form, of the most characteristic attributes of the Epicurean gods.²⁶

After finishing with the poets, historians, mythographers, and grammarians (whose views are catalogued together), Philodemus turns in a separate section to treat philosophers. In order to show the exact sequence of philosophers whose theological views are recounted (with Epicurean criticism) in *On Piety* and their correspondences (and omissions) in the same sequence in Cicero’s *De natura deorum*, I give in the following table a more specific breakdown of Part 2b-c of the outline above:²⁷

Part IIb

[critique of pre-Stoic philosophers]

Philosopher P.Herc. 1428 (<i>HV</i> ² II / Gomperz 1866) collections		Cicero <i>De nat. deor.</i> I	
<i>Auctor Epicureus</i>	fr. 6 (3 ^b p. 64 G.)		
<i>Auctor Epicureus</i>	fr. 7 (3 ^c p. 65 G.)		
Θά[λης]	fr. 8 (missing in <i>HV</i> ² , Gomperz)		25
+			
[‘Ανα]ξίμ[ανδρος]	fr. 8 (missing in <i>HV</i> ² , Gomperz)		25
+			
[‘Α]ναξίμ[ηνς]	fr. 8 (3 ^d p. 65 G.)	= <i>Dox. Gr.</i> pp. 531-2	26
Anaxagoras	fr. 9 (4 ^a p. 66 G.)	= VS 59 A 48	26
<i>Auctor Epicureus</i>	fr. 10,1-4 (4 ^b p. 66 G.)	concludes ?Alcmaeon	27 [Alcmaeon]
+			
Πυθαγόρας	fr. 10,4-8 (4 ^b p. 66 G.)	= VS 14 no. 17	27
<i>Auctor Epicureus</i>	fr. 11 (4 ^c p. 67 G.)	concludes ?Pythagoras	28
<Xenophanes>	fr. 12,1-8 (4 ^d p. 67 G.)	cf. <i>Dox. Gr.</i> p. 534	cf. 28
+			
Παρμενίδης	fr. 12,9 (4 ^d p. 67 G.)	cf. <i>Dox. Gr.</i> p. 534	28
Parmenides	fr. 13A (5 ^a p. 68 G.)	cf. <i>Dox. Gr.</i> pp. 534 ss.	28

²⁶ Negative theology: A. Henrichs, *GRBS* 13 (1972), 83; Obbink 1995, 205.

²⁷ I employ a system adapted from Henrichs 1975, 93-4. Names printed in Greek are preserved in the papyrus or apograph. Names printed in Roman are lost but the attribution is certain. Names in angular brackets indicate that the attribution is uncertain. *Interti auctoris* is used where a doxographical fragment lacks sufficient criteria for an attribution. *auctor Epicureus* is given where Philodemus’ Epicurean criticism is extant on the papyrus, but where the doxographical summary which preceded it is lost. Braces show physical connection of two or more successive fragments. A plus sign between names shows that the actual transition from one philosopher to the next is still extant. Names in bold in square brackets indicate departures from Philodemus in the text of Cicero, either present in the papyrus and omitted by Cicero, or present in Cicero and insufficiently identified in the papyrus. ‘Texts’ given in italics refer to the texts presented in this chapter.

<i>Fragmenta dubia</i>	fr. inter 13 et 14 (ined., location conjectural, perhaps Pythagoras ([μολ]γάδας))	
<i>Incerti auctoris</i>	fr. 14 (5 ^b p. 68 G.)	?Empedocles, Megarians 29 [Empedocles]
<i>Incerti auctoris</i>	fr. 15A (5 ^c p. 69 G.)	?Protagoras and/or Democritus 29 [Protagoras]
[three columns missing between fr. 15A and 15B]		
<i>Incerti auctoris</i>	fr. 15B (O Da p. 69 G.)	?Protagoras and/or Democritus 29
Δημόκριτος	fr. 16 (5 ^d p. 69 G.) = VS 68 A 75, Henrichs 1975, 96	29
Auctor Epicureus	fr. 16 (5 ^d p. 69 G.)	cf. <i>Dox. Gr.</i> pp. 535 s.
Heraclitus	fr. 17 (6 ^a p. 70 G.)	= fr. 79(b), 77(c) Marcovich om. Cic. cf. 74, III 35
Διογένης Apolloniates	fr. 18 (6 ^b p. 70 G.)	= VS 64 A 8 = T 6 Laks (<i>Text 4a</i>) 29 (<i>Text 4b</i>)
Prodicus	fr. 19 (6 ^c p. 71 G.)	= Henrichs 1975, 109 om. Cic. cf. 118, S.E. <i>Math.</i> IX 18, 52
<Plato> (Socrates)	fr. 20A (not in Gomperz)	29-30, cf. 18-24
[two columns are missing between fr. 20 and 20B on an underlying layer]		
Plato (Socrates)	fr. 20B,1-12 (not in Gomperz)	29-30, cf. 18-24
+		
Ξενοφῶν (Socrates)	fr. 20B,20-30 (6 ^d p. 71 G.) = <i>Mem.</i> 4,3,13, Socr. Test. 35 Acosta-Angeli	31
Xenophon (Socrates)	fr. 21,1-7 (7 ^a upper fr. 1-7 p. 72 G. and 8-12) = <i>Mem.</i> 4,3,14	31
+		
Ἀντισθένης	fr. 21,25-32 (7 ^a lower fr. 1-8 p. 72 G.) = fr. 39A Caizzi	32
<Speusippus>	fr. 22,1-10 (7 ^b p. 72 G.) = fr. 57 Tarán = 100 Isnardi	32
+		
Ἀριστοτέλης	fr. 22,10-12 (7 ^b p. 72 G.) = fr. 26 Rose	33
[three columns are missing between fr. 22-23 on an underlying layer]		
<Heraclides Ponticus>	fr. 23B upper half superpositum (ined., cf. Henrichs, <i>GRBS</i> 13/1972, 80)	34
Theophrastus	fr. 23A (7 ^c p. 73 G.)	= fr. 581-2 Fortenbaugh et al. 34
Τρωάτων	fr. 23B lower half (not in Gomperz, Schober)	35
<i>Incerti auctoris</i>	fr. 24 (7 ^d p. 73 G.)	Strato cont. or Zeno? 36-7 [Zeno]
[two columns are lost between fr. 24 and col. 1]		
		37 [Aristo]

Part IIc

[critique of Stoic philosophers]

Philosopher	col.	P.Herc. 1428	collections	Cicero <i>De nat. deor.</i> I
Cleanthes	352	col. 1 (Henrichs 1974, 12) = <i>SVF</i> i 168, 170 (Zeno)		36
Κλεάνθης	353	col. 2,8-24 (p. 13 H.)	not in <i>SVF</i>	37
+				
Περσαίος	354-5	col. 2,24-4,12 (pp. 13-14 H.)	= <i>SVF</i> i 531, 448	38
+				
Χρύσιππος	356-60 (<i>Texts</i> 5-7a)	col. 4,12-8,13 (pp. 15-18 H.)	= <i>SVF</i> ii 1076-81	39-41 (<i>Text</i> 7b)
+				
Διογένης ὁ Βαβυλωνίος	360-2 (<i>Text</i> 8a)	col. 8,14-10,8 (pp. 19-20 H.)	= <i>SVF</i> iii Diogenes	33 41 (<i>Text</i> 8b)
+				
Διαγόρας (digression)	363	col. 11,5-12,2 (pp. 21-2 H.)	= fr. 3,5 Jacoby,	om. Cic. cf. 63,
	Aristox. fr. 127a	Wehrli S.E. <i>Math.</i> IX 18, 52		118,
conclusion	367	col. 15,23 (p. 26 H.)		43 [end of Philo- sophenkritik]

Philodemus' treatment of the pre-Stoics prefaces his engagement with the Stoics in the next section, and like the critique of the poets and historians, it is meant to inform the attack on the Stoics who, he notes, habitually cited these figures in support of (or as having prefigured and therefore as confirming) Stoic views. Once again Cicero seems to have been largely unaware of, or chose to ignore, this focus, leading to some distortion. R. McKirahan²⁸ has established that in every case Philodemus is closer to our doxographic sources, while Cicero has introduced other, often unattested inaccuracies into his rendering. Noteworthy is the fact that the order of philosophers treated by both Philodemus and Cicero is identical, with the amount of space devoted to each roughly proportionate; Cicero's versions are more often than not abbreviated in comparison with the Greek original. Also apparently for reasons of economy, Cicero has omitted Heraclitus and Prodicus, while there is no philosopher present in Cicero who is not present or suspected in Philodemus' treatment.²⁹

VII. *The Universe of the Wise*

Philodemus' main ground of complaint is that these philosophers champion insensate, inanimate, non-anthropomorphic divinities, a complaint that will be levelled with much more venom against the Stoics in the next section. A case can be made that many, if not all, of Philodemus' negative citations appeared in a positive light in one of his Stoic sources. A good example from Philodemus' catalogue is his brief treatment of Diogenes of Apollonia:

Text 4a

Philod. *De piet.* col. 336:³⁰ ὁ δ' Ἀπολλων[ιάτης] Διογένης ἐπαι[νεῖ] τὸν Ὀ[μ]ήρου ὡς ο[ὐ] μυθικ[ῶς] ἀλλ' ἀληθ[ῶς] ὑπὲρ τοῦ θεοῦ διειλεγμένον· τὸν ἄρα γὰρ αὐτὸν Δία νομίζειν φησίν, ³⁰ ἐπειδὴ πᾶν εἰδέναι τὸν Δία λέγει καὶ ...

Diogenes of Apollonia praises Homer for having spoken not fantastically but actually about the divine: for he asserts³¹ that he

²⁸ McKirahan 1996.

²⁹ Cf. Henrichs 1975, 114 n. 76: "As a general rule, P.Herc 1428 deserves higher credibility than Cicero whenever the two versions are at variance, especially when the disagreement is due to an omission by Cicero".

³⁰ P.Herc. 1428 fr. 18 lines 22-31 (84 A 8DK, T6 Laks).

³¹ Diogenes.

considers³² the air to be Zeus himself, since he says³³ that Zeus knows everything³⁴ and ...³⁵

With Cicero’s version for comparison:

Text 4b

Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 29-30: quid aer, quo Diogenes Apolloniates utitur deo, quem sensum habere potest aut quam formam dei?

As to air, which Diogenes of Apollonia treats as God, what perception or form of god could it have?

This is quite in line with the interests of the Stoics, for whom, according to Philodemus, god is air, which in turn is fire, war, Graces, Athena — it is all the same — both wishing and not wishing to be called Zeus:

Text 5

Philod. *De piet.* cols. 356-8:³⁶ ἀλ[λὰ μὴν] καὶ Χρύσιπ[πος]³⁷ τὸ π[ᾶν ἐπὶ Δι]’ ἀ[ν]άγνων ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ θεῶν Δία φη[σὶν εἶναι τὸν] ἀπαντ[ὰ διοικοῦ]ντα λόγον κ[αὶ τὴν] τοῦ ὅλου ψυ[χ]ή[ν, καὶ] τῇ τούτου μ[ετοχ]ῇ πάντα [ζῆν, ἀν]θ[ρώπ]ους [κ]αὶ θ[ηρί]α³⁸ καὶ τοὺς λί[θ]ους, διὸ καὶ Ζῆνα¹²⁵ καλε[ῖσθ]αι, Δία δ’ ὅτι πάντων αἵτιον καὶ κύριον. τὸν τε κόσμον ἔμψ[υ]χον εἶναι καὶ θεὸν [κ]αὶ τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν [κ]αὶ τὴν <τοῦ> ὄ[λου]¹³⁰ ψ[υχ]ήν, καὶ ο[ὕ]τως [ἀ]νὰ λ[ό]γον συνά[γε]σθαι τὸν Δία καὶ τὴν κοινὴν πάντων ἡ³⁵⁷ φύσιν καὶ εἰμαρμένην καὶ ἀνάγκην· καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν εἶναι καὶ Εὐνομίαν καὶ Δί[α]κην καὶ Ὁμόνοϊαν καὶ Ἰρήνην καὶ Ἀφροδίτην καὶ τὸ παρ[α]πλήσιον πᾶν· καὶ μὴ εἶναι θεοὺς ἄρρενας μηδὲ¹¹⁰ θηλείας, ὥς μηδὲ πόλεις μηδ’ ἀρετάς, ὀνομάζεσθαι δὲ μόνον

³² Homer. The pronoun is to be taken with ‘Zeus’: ‘for he (Diogenes) says that he (Homer) considers that the air is Zeus himself, since he (Homer) says that Zeus knows everything’. For air as a god, see also 247 6a (Musaeus and Epimenides), 1428 8 (Anaximenes).

³³ Homer, *Il* 24, 88, *Od.* 20, 75, *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* IV 322.

³⁴ Presumably because the word here for Zeus, *Dia*, is a homograph for the preposition meaning ‘through’, ‘throughout’: i.e., because (as Homer says) Zeus knows everything, he must be the same as air, which goes ‘through’ all things. (A similar argument is later attributed to the Stoic Chrysippus, col. 358,4-6 = Text 5 below). Like Anaximenes, whom he followed, Diogenes made air the first element, claiming that it possessed universal sentience. Diogenes is further reported to have developed a physiological theory, according to which human thought and psychology were attributed to the internal movement of air.

³⁵ Text breaks off here, but perhaps it continued: ‘[and that he rules all things]’.

³⁶ = P.Herc. 1428 col. 4 line 12–col. 6 line 16 (cf. Henrichs 1974, 15-18). Translated at Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 39-40.

³⁷ = *iam vero Chrysippus* at Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 39.

³⁸ [ζῆν, ἀν]θ[ρώπ]ους [κ]αὶ θ[ηρί]α is left unrestored in Henrichs 1974, 15.

ἀρρενικῶς καὶ θηλυκῶς ταῦτ' ὄντα, ¹⁵ καθάπερ Σελήνην καὶ [Μ]ῆνα· καὶ τὸν Ἄρη κ[ατὰ τ]οῦ πολέμιον [ε]τάχθ[αι] καὶ τῆς τά[ξεως] καὶ ἀντιτά[20]ξε[ως]. Ἥφαιστον δὲ πῦρ εἶναι, καὶ Κρόνον [μὲν τ]ὸν τοῦ ρεύματος ῥο[ῦ]ν, Ῥέαν δὲ τὴν γῆν, Δία δὲ τὸν αἰθέ[25]ρα· τοὺς δὲ τὸν Ἀπόλλω,³⁹ κα[ὶ] τὴν Δήμητρα γῆν ἣ τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ πνεῦμα· καὶ παιδαριωδῶς λέγεσθαι ³⁰ καὶ γράφεσθαι καὶ πλάτ[τε]σθαι [θ]εοὺς ἀνθρώποις εἰδείς, ὃν τρόπον καὶ πόλεις καὶ ποταμούς καὶ τόπους καὶ πά[35]λλ[θ]η· καὶ Δία μὲν εἶναι [τ]ὸν περὶ τὴν [γ]ῆν ἄερα, [τ]ὸν δὲ σκο[τ]εινὸν Ἀιδὸν τὸν δὲ διὰ τῆς ¹⁵ γῆς καὶ θαλάττης Ποσειδῶ· καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους δὲ θεοὺς ἀψύχοις ὥς καὶ τούτους συνοικεῖ· καὶ τὸν ἥλιον ¹⁰ [τ]ε καὶ τὴν σελήνην καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀστέρας θεοὺς οἶται καὶ τὸν νόμον· καὶ ἄ[ν]θρωπους εἰς ¹⁵ θεοὺς φησι μεταβάλλειν.

But indeed Chrysippus too,⁴⁰ referring everything to Zeus, says in the first book of his *On Gods* that Zeus is the principle of reason that rules over everything and is the soul of the universe; and that by virtue of a share in it⁴¹, all things — humans and beasts and even the stones — are alive, on account of which⁴² it⁴³ is also called Zena, and Dia, since it is the cause and the ruling element of all things. The world, he says, is a living thing and a god, and so is its ruling element and the soul of the whole; thus one gathers analogously that Zeus, and the universal nature of all things,⁴⁴ and Fate, and Necessity are God too. Eunomia and Dike and Homonoia and Eirene and Aphrodite and everything of this sort are all the same being. There are no male or female gods, just as cities and virtues are really neither male nor female, but are only called masculine or feminine, though their substances are the same, just like Selene and Men.⁴⁴ Ares, he says, is about war and Arrangement and Opposition.⁴⁵ Hephaestus is fire, Kronos the flowing of the flow.⁴⁶ Rhea is earth, Zeus Aether, although some people say⁴⁷ he is Apollo, and Demeter is earth or the pneuma in it.⁴⁸ It is simply childish to represent them, in speaking, in painting, or sculpture, in human form, the way we do cities, and rivers, and places, and ethical states. || The air about the earth, he says, is Zeus, that in darkness is Hades, and that which goes through⁴⁹

³⁹ On the punctuation (which differs from Henrichs 1974, 16) see P. Woodward, *CErc* 18 (1988), 38 and n. 46.

⁴⁰ Like the other Stoics (Cleanthes, Persaeus) who precede in Philodemus.

⁴¹ sc. Zeus = reason (*logos*) = soul of the universe.

⁴² i.e., on account of its 'living' (ζῆν).

⁴³ sc. the principle of reason (λόγος).

⁴⁴ The Anatolian god Men, often found paired with the crescent moon or represented as Selene (= Luna) in iconography, here interpreted by Chrysippus as a masculine representation of the same divinity.

⁴⁵ Or: 'drawing up for battle and the opposing battle-line'.

⁴⁶ i.e., the flow of the stream of time.

⁴⁷ sc. according to Chrysippus.

⁴⁸ The punctuation and sense here differs from Henrichs 1974: see P. Woodward, *CErc* 18 (1988), 38 and n. 46.

⁴⁹ The explanation posits a connection between the preposition *dia* in the sense 'through' and the homograph *Dia*, the oblique case of the word for Zeus.

the earth and sea is Poseidon. He assimilates the other gods to lifeless things just as he does these, and he considers the sun, moon and other stars gods, and also the law; and he says that men change into gods.

This passage is sufficient to sample in a continuous context Philodemus’ distinctive procedure in *On Piety* (obscured in the more fragmentary portions) of the piling up of examples, or ‘composition by compilation’. Here most of Chrysippus’ footnoting of sources and authorities has been stripped from the Epicurean text. But correspondences between the Stoics authorities cited here and the poets and philosophers criticised earlier by Philodemus lay open to view the origin of those citations and the motivation behind his criticism. Heraclitus, for example, is more than once said to be adduced by the Stoics, as confirming their views:

Text 6

Philod. *De piet.* cols. 359-60:⁵⁰ τὰ παραπλήσια δὲ καὶ τοῖς Περὶ φύσεως
|¹⁵ γράφει μεθ’ ὧν εἵπαμεν καὶ τοῖς Ἡρακλ[εῖ]του συνοικειῶν κ[οιν]ῇ.⁵¹
καὶ τῷ πρώτῳ τὴν Νύκτα |²⁰ θεάν φησιν εἶναι πρωτίστην· ἐν δὲ τῷ
τρίτῳ τὸν κόσμον ἕνα τῶν φρονίμων, συνπολεῖ²⁵ τευόμενον θεοῖς καὶ
ἀνθρώποις, καὶ τὸν πόλεμον καὶ τὸν Δία τὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι, καθάπερ καὶ
|³⁰ τὸν Ἡράκλειτον λέγειν· ἐν δὲ τῷ πέμπτῳ καὶ λόγους ἐλ³⁶⁰ρωτᾷ
περὶ τοῦ [τ]ὸν κόσμον ζῶιον εἶναι καὶ λογικὸν καὶ φρονοῦν κα(ι) θεόν.
καὶ |⁵ τοῖς Περὶ προνοίας μέντοι τὰς αὐτὰς ἐκτίθησιν συνοικειώσεις τῇ
ψυχῇ τοῦ παντός καὶ τὰ |¹⁰ τῶν θεῶν ὀνόματα ἐφαρμόττει τῆς
δρεμύτητος ἀπολαύων ἀκοπιάτως.

He (sc. Chrysippus) writes comparable things in his *On Nature*, in addition to those⁵² of whom we have spoken, assimilating them⁵³ generally to Heraclitus’ teachings as well. Thus in the first book he says that Night is the very first goddess; in the third book that the cosmos is a single entity, constituted of the wise,⁵⁴ its citizenship being held by gods and human beings, and that war and Zeus are the same, as (he says) Heraclitus also affirms. In the fifth book (of *On Nature*)

⁵⁰ = P.Herc. 1428 col. 7 line 12–col. 8 line 13 (cf. Henrichs 1974, 20).

⁵¹ κ[οιν]ῇ was restored by Hayter on the basis of the Oxford apograph, which is here superior to the extant papyrus; Henrichs 1974, 18, prints Sauppe’s supplement κ[αὶ δ]ῇ.

⁵² viz. in addition to the poets, Orpheus, Musaeus, Homer et al. in col. 358 (Text 5 above).

⁵³ i.e., making their (the Stoics’) views seem to accord with the statements of Heraclitus.

⁵⁴ i.e., the cosmos is a unity populated by wise entities. Henrichs 1974, 18, however, translates: “der Kosmos sei einer der Weisen und gehöre zum Staat der Götter und Menschen” (see discussion below).

he gives arguments || in connection with the thesis that the universe is a living being and rational and exercises understanding and is a god. In his books *On Pronoia* he sets forth the same identifications with the soul of the universe and attaches names of gods, allowing full scope to his subtlety and imagination.

André Laks (following Henrichs' translation) has argued⁵⁵ that κόσμον ἓνα τῶν φρονίμων here means 'the universe is one of the wise', on the grounds that the doctrine that the cosmos is itself wise and rational is independently attested for Chrysippus. Philodemus himself says as much a few lines later: the universe 'is rational and exercises understanding'. Yet I stand by the translation given above, since Chrysippus was especially remembered for having declared that the κόσμος was εἷς, where εἷς has the sense of εἷς καὶ ὁ αὐτός or κοινός or ξυνός.⁵⁶ Heraclitus (whom, according to Philodemus, Chrysippus was echoing here⁵⁷) in fr. B30DK κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν ('this universe, the same for all, did none of gods or men make'), exhibits the post-position of ὁ αὐτός (ὁ εἷς), combined with the objective genitive.⁵⁸ I have argued

⁵⁵ A. Laks, Review of Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* (1991) in *Ancient Philosophy* 14 (1994), 459-60; cf. Schofield, p. 74 with n. 19.

⁵⁶ Cleanthes, *Hymn. ad Jov.*, SVF i no. 537 line 21, Plut. *De stoic. rep.* 1035c, 1065f, *De virt. Alex.* 329ab πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡγώμενθα δημότας καὶ πολίτας, εἷς δὲ βίος ἢ καὶ κόσμος, a hotly contested passage, but εἷς κόσμος must be authentically Stoic in just this sense. The expression εἷς κόσμος gets its own entry in Adler's index, and now appears in the new theological fragments of Diogenes of Oenoanda, 20 II 1 Smith τὸν τοῦτων (sc. Stoici) λόγον ἓνα τοῦτον || ἀποφαινομένων κόσμον. In Heraclitus fr. 64 κεραυνὸν τὸ πῦρ is said to be φρόνιμον. If the cosmos were only one (of the wise), out of a larger plurality of wise entities, it would be paradoxical to say the least, since the cosmos subsumes all entities. Though the cosmos is rational, to say that it was 'one of the wise' would impute more human characteristics.

⁵⁷ For κόσμον ἓνα, see also Heraclitus fr. 89 (Plut. *De superst.* 166c) ἓνα καὶ κοινὸν κόσμον εἶναι (cf. D.L. IX 8 καὶ ἓνα εἶναι κόσμον). With the genitive: M. Ant. VII 9 συγκατατέτακται γὰρ καὶ συγκοσμεῖ (sc. πάντα) τὸν οὐτὸν κόσμον· κόσμος τε γὰρ εἷς ἐξ ἀπάντων, καὶ θεὸς εἷς δι' ἀπάντων; D. L. IX 12 κόσμον ἓνα τῶν ζυμπάντων. As for the testimonia later in the passage, Chrysippus was clearly thinking of fr. 53 πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεὺς, καὶ τοὺς μὲν θεοὺς ἔδειξε τοὺς δὲ ἀνθρώπους, τοὺς μὲν δούλους ἐποίησε τοὺς δὲ ἐλευθέρους ('war is the father of all and king of all, and some he shows as gods, others as men; some he makes slaves, others free') (in Homer Zeus is commonly called father of gods and men). Cf. fr. 2 τοῦ λόγου δ' ἐόντος ζυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν ('although the logos is common the many live as though they had a private understanding').

⁵⁸ The genitive figures in several Stoic definitions of κόσμος: Diogenes of Babylon ap. Philod. *Rhet.* III, P.Herc. 1506 viii (SVF iii fr. 117) ἀ[φρ]όνων γὰρ πόλις [οὐκ ἔσ]στιν οὐδὲ νόμος, ἀλλὰ τῶ[ν] | ἐκ θεῶν καὶ σοφῶν συστημάτων; Stob. *Eclogae* I 184,8 W. κόσμον δ' εἶναι φησιν ὁ Χρύσιππος τὸ ἐκ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων σύστημα καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔνεκα τούτων γεγονότων; Arius Didymus ap. Eus. *Praep. ev.* XV 15 λέγεσθαι δὲ κόσμον καὶ τὸ οἰκτῆριον θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων; cf. Heraclitus fr. 114 ἓνα λόγον καὶ

elsewhere that, according to Philodemus, Chrysippus was describing not a utopia of sages and gods that might under the best circumstances one day come into being, but a σύστημα that already exists in the nature of the world.⁵⁹ For those who understand, there exists not the kind of chaotic world of diversity and multiplicity experienced by ἄφρονες, but a single world, lived-in politically by gods (who are by definition wise) and men (who are potentially so), characterised by the kind of unceasing (and therefore regular and unitary) change described by Heraclitus (as the Stoics read him). While such a world might be awaited indefinitely by normal progressors, for the Stoic wise man this is a feature of the cosmos as it exists now, not only in thought but as a material, cosmic reality.

VIII. *Stoics before the Stoics*

But Heraclitus is not the only figure so appealed to. According to Philodemus the Stoics specifically claim that their views on the divine are not inconsistent with what Heraclitus and Orpheus and Euripides said (continuing on from Text 5 above):

Text 7a

Philod. *De piet.* cols. 358-9:⁶⁰ ἐν δὲ τῷ δευτέρ[ω]ι τά τε εἰς Ὀρφέα κ[αὶ] Μουσαῖον ἀναφερόμενα καὶ τὰ ^{l20} παρ’ Ὀμήρῳ καὶ Ἡσιόδῳ καὶ Εὐριπίδῃ καὶ ποιηταῖς ἄλλοις γ’ [ὥ]ς καὶ Κλεάνθης [π]ειρᾶται σ[υ]νοί²⁵κειν ταῖς δόξαις αὐτῶ[ν]· ἅπαντά [τ’] ἐστὶν αἰθήρ, ὁ αὐτὸς ὦν καὶ πατήρ καὶ υἱός, ὥς καὶ τῷ ^{l30} πρώτῳ μὴ μάχεσθαι τὸ τὴν ‘Ρέ³⁵⁹αν καὶ μητέρα τ[οῦ] Διὸς εἶναι καὶ θυγ[α]τέρα. τὰς δ’ αὐτάς

μίαν πρόνοιαν . . . περιγυνομένην ἁπάντων καὶ κρατοῦσαν.

⁵⁹ ‘The Stoic Sage in the Cosmic City’, in K. Ierodiakonou (ed.), *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*, Oxford 1999, 178-95. Similarly the notion that the cosmic city is populated not merely by humans but by gods as well, seems to be meant not merely rhetorically (i.e., as a zeugma gods + men = all rational beings), nor again quite literally, but in a reductionist sense: it is not the literal, Romantic conception whereby gods and men would one day again dine together, as they had according to Hesiod before Prometheus’ quarrel with Zeus, but rather simply the standard Stoic understanding of what gods are: Athena, for instance, is simply the embodiment of rationality, which, according to the Stoics, inhabits the universe. Being rational, the universe is itself a god, not at some future time but for all time. Likewise men too participate in the one actual (not ideal) cosmos by virtue of their rationality.

⁶⁰ P.Herc. 1428 col. 6 line 16-col. 7 line 12 (cf. Henrichs 1974, 17).

ποιεῖται συνοικεῖ[ώ]σεις κἀν τῶι Περὶ Χαρίτων καὶ τὸν Δία νόμον
φησί(ν) εἶναι καὶ τὰς Ἥαριτας τὰς ἡμετέρας καὶ¹⁰ ταρχὰς καὶ τὰς
ἀνταποδόσεις τῶν εὐεργεσιῶν.

In the second book, like Cleanthes, he (sc. Chrysippus) tries to accommodate the things attributed to Orpheus and Musaeus, and the things found in Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, and indeed other poets, to their⁶¹ views: aether, which is both father and son, (he says) is everything, just as in the first book he says that there is no contradiction in Rhea's being both mother and daughter of Zeus. He makes the same identifications in his book *On the Graces*, where he says that Zeus is the law and that the Graces are our sacrificial offerings and exchanges of favours.

I give here the collateral text to this passage in Cicero's briefer version, for the instructive if contrasting comparison it provides, revealing Cicero's own Academic reading of Philodemus' Epicurean criticism of the Stoics:

Text 7b

Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 41 et haec quidem in primo libro de natura deorum, in secundo autem volt Orphei, Musaei, Hesiodi Homerique fabellas accommodare ad ea, quae ipse primo libro de deis immortalibus dixerat, ut etiam veterimi poetae, qui haec ne suspicati quidem sint, Stoici fuisse videantur.

These views, at any rate, are set out in the first book of his (sc. Chrysippus') *On the Nature of the Gods*. In the second book, he attempts to assimilate the tales of Orpheus, Musaeus, Hesiod, and Homer to his own account of the immortal gods in book one, with the result that even the oldest poets, who never had any idea of these doctrines, seem to have been Stoics.

A. A. Long has pointed out⁶² what had previously escaped notice, namely that in Cicero's version, the *ut* clause, stating that the Stoics ended up by making the cited poets and philosophers 'seem to have been Stoics',⁶³ i.e., appear as precursors of Stoic views, is represented nowhere in Philodemus, but was added out of whole cloth by Cicero. In other words, Cicero has deliberately over-polemicised his rendition, making his Epicurean spokesman accuse Chrysippus and Cleanthes of something they never did – namely claim that the old

⁶¹ The Stoics'.

⁶² Long 1992, 49-50.

⁶³ I take *ut ... videantur* to express not a final but a result clause. Cicero may also be taken as implying that the Stoics intended such a result.

poets and philosophers had themselves been Stoics. As Long notes, Philodemus says only that the Stoics accommodate τὰ τε εἰς Ὀρφέα κ[αὶ] Μουσαῖον ἀναφερόμενα, ‘the things attributed to Orpheus and Musaeus’ (i.e., divine names and myths), not that they made the poets (or pre-Socratics) out to be Stoics themselves.

When Philodemus says that Chrysippus et al. συνοικειοῦν,⁶⁴ he means that as a working method in any inquiry (in this case theology), they typically adduce as many possible examples of a given ἔννοια (that god is air, for example; or as an enthymeme: that god is what is universally pervasive, and air is universally pervasive). These may be drawn from authoritative or random sources, popular parlance, or archaic usage, the more (and more obscure) the better. Special interpretive measures akin to allegory, such as that the poets commonly ἀνίπτεσθαι, make possible the augmenting of the list to include a substantial sampling, on the presupposition that in linguistic usage meaning votes with its feet. But ultimately συνοικειώσεις has nothing to do with allegory (i.e., hermeneutics) per se but with epistemology. The Stoics’ συνοικειώσεις authorise identifications of one deity with another, or many with a single principle (motherhood or procreation, for example, in the case of the list of feminine divinities equated with one another at P.Herc. 1428 fr. 3⁶⁵), and ultimately act as confirmatory criteria for the unitary nature of the divine or its existence as a principle. The examples catalogued ultimately instantiate and construct κοινὰ ἔννοια, in which the Stoics were interested as epistemological criteria.⁶⁶

IX. *The Other Theogony*

The Stoics’ method in theology (as depicted by Philodemus) can best be viewed in action from Philodemus’ treatment of the most recent philosopher to appear in Philodemus’ history of theology – Diogenes of Babylon:

⁶⁴ = Cicero’s *accomodare*. Lexicographical background: Obbink 1994, 111 n. 3, 113 n. 11. Elizabeth Asmis suggests to me that Philodemus’ repeated use συνοικειοῦν in this passage might have inspired the confusion represented in Cicero’s *ut Stoici fuisse videantur*.

⁶⁵ Text and translation: Obbink 1994, 114-15, with further discussion.

⁶⁶ Obbink 1992, esp. 216-25.

Text 8a

Philod. *De piet.* cols. 360-2.⁶⁷ Διογένης δ' ὁ Βαβυλ¹⁵λώνιος ἐν τῷ Περι τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τὸν κόσμον γράφει τῷ Δι[ι] τὸν αὐτὸν ὑπάρχειν ἢ περιέχειν ¹²⁰ τ[ὸ]ν Δία καθάπερ ἄνθρωπ[ο]ν ψυχῇ· καὶ τὸν ἥλ[ι]ον μ[ὲν] Ἀπόλλω, [τ]ὴν δ[ὲ] σε[λ]ήνην [Ἄ]ρτεμιν· [καί] ¹²⁵ παιδα[ρι]ῶδες εἶνα[ι] θεοὺς ἄ[ν]θρωποε[ι]δεῖς λ[έ]γε[ι]ν καὶ ἀδύνατον· εἶ[ν]αι τε τοῦ Διὸς τὸ μὲν εἰς τὴν ¹³⁰θάλατταν διατετακὸς Ποσειδῶνα, τὸ δ' εἰς τὴν γῆν Δήμητρα, τὸ δ' εἰς τὸν ἀέρα Ἥραν, καί ³⁶¹θάπερ καὶ Πλάτων⁶⁸ λέγειν, ὥς ἐάν πολλάκις ἄῃρ' λέγη τις ἐρεῖν' Ἥρα', τ[ὸ] ¹⁵δ' εἰς τὸν αἰθ[ε]ρά Ἀθηνᾶν· τοῦτο γὰρ λέγ[ε]σθαι τὸ 'ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς' καὶ 'Ζεὺς ἄρρηγ Ζεὺς θῆλυς'· τινὰς ¹¹⁰δὲ τῶν Στωικῶν φάσκειν ὅτι τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ· φρόνησιν γὰρ[ρ] εἶναι, διὸ καὶ Μῆτιν ¹⁵καλεῖσθαι· Χρῦσιππον δ' ἐν τῷ στῆ[θ]ει τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν εἶναι ἀκαεὶ τὴν [Ἀθ]ηνᾶν γεγονένα[ι] ¹²⁰φ[ρ]όνησιν οὖσαν, τῷ δὲ τ[ῆ]ν φωνὴν ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐκκρίνεσθαι λέγειν ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς, 'ὑπὸ δὲ Ἡ¹²⁵φαίσ[του]' δ[ι]ότι τ[ῆ] τέλ[χ]νῃ⁶⁹ γίνεθ' ἢ φρόνησις· καὶ Ἀθηνᾶν μὲν οἷον Ἀθηρῶν εἰρησθαι, Τ[ριτ]ωνίδα δὲ καὶ ¹³⁰Τριτογένειαν διὰ τὸ τὴν φρόνησιν ἐκ τριῶν συνεστηκέναι λόγων, ³⁶²τῶν φυσικῶν καὶ τῶν [ῆ]θικῶν καὶ τῶν λογικῶν· καὶ τὰς ἄλλας δ' αὐτῆς π[ρ]ο[σ]ηγορί⁵ας καὶ τὰ φόρηματα μάλα καταχρῶσας τῇ φρονήσει συνοικειοῖ.

Diogenes of Babylon in his book *On Athena* says that the cosmos is the same as Zeus, or it comprises him as a man does a soul. The sun, he says, is Apollo, the moon Artemis; and that anthropomorphic gods are a childish and impossible story. The part of Zeus that extends into the sea is Poseidon, that which belongs to the earth Demeter, and to the air Hera, || as (he says) Plato also says, so that if one says the word 'air' over and over again, he will say 'Hera'. That which extends into the aether (is called) Athena: this is what is meant by 'from the head' and 'Zeus masculine, Zeus feminine'. Some of the Stoics (he says) say the ruling faculty of volition is in the head, for it is wisdom, and therefore is also called Metis. But Chrysippus (according to Diogenes) says that the ruling element of the soul is in the breast, and that Athena, who is wisdom, was born there. But because the voice issues from the head, they⁷⁰ say from the head;⁷¹ and they say⁷² 'by Hephaestus'⁷³ because wisdom is acquired by means of technical skill.

⁶⁷ P.Herc. 1428 col. 8 line 14–col. 10 line 8 (= SVF 3 Diogenes 33, cf. Henrichs 1974, 19–20).

⁶⁸ Henrichs 1974, 19 read κ[αί] τ[ὸ]ν Πλάτωνα.

⁶⁹ Henrichs 1974, 20 supplied τ[έ]λ[χ]νῃ.

⁷⁰ i.e., people in general (including the rival Stoics who hold that the ruling faculty resides in the head).

⁷¹ i.e., they say that it (i.e., wisdom) comes from the head.

⁷² i.e., people in general say 'by Hephaestus' (namely, when they swear an oath by this god).

⁷³ i.e., the skilled, metal-working craftsman god who wielded the axe that liberated Athena from Zeus' head when she was born. According to Diogenes, Chrysippus explained the myth as dramatising the acquisition of wisdom by means of technical skill (*technē*), rather than as showing the ruling faculty of the soul (and

So one says 'Athena' as though it were Athrena, and she is called Tritonis and Tritogeneia because wisdom has three branches, || physics, ethics, and logic. He most artfully adapts the rest of her epithets and attributes to suit his explanation of our faculty of understanding.

Cicero by contrast has reduced Philodemus' summary of Diogenes to diminutive proportions, a summary which entirely obscures the Stoic's method of inductive theology illustrated by Philodemus' extended catalogue:

Text 8b

Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 41 quem (sc. Chrysippum) Diogenes Babylonius consequens in eo libro qui inscribitur de Minerva partum Iovis ortumque virginis ad physiologiam traducens deiungit a fabula.

Diogenes of Babylon follows him (sc. Chrysippus) in his book entitled *On Minerva*, in which he tries to detach the maiden Athena's origin in birth from Jupiter and interpret it in terms of natural science.

In *On Athena* Diogenes had defended at length Chrysippus' view that the ruling part of the soul resides in the chest, and that a vast array of speech phenomena (φωνή), including myths told by the poets, offer evidence for this positioning of the ruling part of the soul (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν). From Galen's treatise *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* we know many of the numerous quotations from the poets adduced by Chrysippus and Diogenes (Galen says they numbered in the thousands).⁷⁴

From Galen we also know (3.8.8-19) that Chrysippus used a text of Hesiod's *Theogony* that was radically different from the one we have. Some of the passages from the poets criticised by Philodemus earlier in *On Piety* can be correlated with Diogenes' positions as described by Philodemus, and so seem to have been cited by Diogenes in defense of his position in his book *On Athena* (e.g. about the birth of Athena from Zeus' head) or on Athena's epithet as Pallas:

therefore wisdom) to be located in the head.

⁷⁴ Text: Ph. H. De Lacy, *Galenī de placitis Hippocratis et Platonis libri I-V*, Corpus Medicorum Graecorum V 4,1,2 (Berlin 1978). For further discussion: T. Tieleman, *Galen and Chrysippus: Argument and Refutation in the De Placitis Books Two-Three*, Quaestiones Infnitae 3, Utrecht 1992, especially pp. 79-119 on Diogenes' *On the Regent Part of the Soul*.

Text 9

Philod. *De piet.* cols. 182-3:⁷⁵ . . . [ἐν] α[ι]γίδει μ[υ]θεύει. ἔνιοι δὲ τὴν
 'Α[θην]ᾶν 'Παλλάδα' [εἰν]αί¹²⁵ φασιν ὅτι Πα[λλά]δα τὴν
 Παλαμ[άο]νος ἐκυτῆς ὅπ[α]δὸν οὖσαν ἄκο[υ]σα δ[ι]έφθειρεν. ¹³⁰ τοὺς
 [δ]ὲ ταρταλλ¹⁸³[ρωθῆναι]

... tells that ... on her shield.⁷⁶ Some say that Athena actually is
 'Pallas'⁷⁷ because she accidentally⁷⁸ killed Palamaon's daughter Pallas
 who was her servant.⁷⁹ But that some of them⁸⁰ are imprisoned in
 Tartarus⁸¹ ...⁸²

Though Cicero calls Diogenes' book *De Minerva* at I 41 (Text 8b above), this passage shows why Cicero later refers to Diogenes' book as *Περὶ Παλλάδος* in his letter to Atticus (Text 1 above).

It is no doubt the case that neither Philodemus, nor his teacher Zeno, consulted all the literary works with which they might have seemed to be familiar. Instead, Philodemus is found in his familiar pose of responding point for point, in polemic with his teacher's favourite opponent, Diogenes of Babylon. The correspondences between Philodemus' mythography in *Περὶ εὐσεβείας* and that of the grammarian Apollodorus of Athens noticed by Albert Henrichs and others⁸³ are easily explained through the discovery of this common source: according to our sources, Apollodorus was a student of

⁷⁵ P.Herc. 242 fr. 3 lines 1-9 (cf. Henrichs, *CErc* 5 (1975), 30).

⁷⁶ Lost are the title of the work and name of an author who 'narrates that [Athena, having killed the Giant Pallas, put him] on her shield'.

⁷⁷ i.e., is known as, has the epithet Pallas, an alternative to the version that Pallas was a Giant killed by Athena. The explanation of the epithet here is probably due to Philodemus' mythographic source. The equation of Athena and Pallas anticipates those who like the Stoics synthesise two or more gods into a single entity (cf. Texts 6-8 above).

⁷⁸ Philodemus sarcastically apologises, on the poets' behalf: but what kind of a god would have accidents?

⁷⁹ Philodemus implies it is unfitting for Athena, a goddess, to have needed a servant in the first place. This complaint, secondary to that of homicide, anticipates a later section on the gods' servitudes in the poets.

⁸⁰ Probably the Giants, whose existence as strange births of the gods form the subject of this section.

⁸¹ i.e., in the underworld.

⁸² Probably continued: 'is said by some author'.

⁸³ A. Henrichs, 'Philodemos De Pietate als mythographische Quelle', *CErc* 5 (1975), 5-38 developing the thesis of J. Dietze, 'Die mythologischen Quellen für Philodemos Schrift *περὶ εὐσεβείας*', *Jahrbuch für Philologie* 153 (1896), 218-226. No doubt Philodemus (perhaps via his teacher Zeno) drew on both Diogenes and Apollodorus of Athens, whose work is also frequently cited in the books of the Herculaneum library. Both Stoics, their working methods were intimately linked and no doubt they shared many of the same examples.

Diogenes.⁸⁴ Philodemus’ dependence on Zeno also helps to explain some of Diogenes’ prominence in the books from Herculaneum. He is the second most frequently cited philosopher in the library, after Epicurus but before any of Epicurus’ pupils.⁸⁵

X. *All Gods are True*

After his cannibalised version of Diogenes of Babylon, Cicero at this point inserts the summary of the poets views on the gods (Text 3b above) given earlier in Philodemus’ treatise, before concluding Velleius’ criticism of Greek views of divinity. In Philodemus, the report of Diogenes of Babylon’s views (Text 8a above) is immediately followed by a summation of the Stoics’ views:

Text 10a

Philod. *De piet.* cols. 362-3:⁸⁶ πάντες οὖν οἱ ἀπὸ Ζ[ή]νωνος, εἰ καὶ ἀ[π]έλειπον τὸ δαιμόνιον, ὥσπερ οἱ μὲν οὐκ ἀπ[έ]λειπον, [οἱ] δ’ ἔν τισιν οὐκ ἀπέλειπον, ἓνα θεὸν λέγου[υ]σιν εἶ[ν]αι· γινέσθω δ[ὲ] καὶ τὸ πᾶν σὺν τῇ ψυχῇ· πλανῶσιν δ’ ὥς πολλοὺς ἀπολείπον[τε]ς. ὥσθ’, [ὁ]τ’ ἄνομον οὐ⁸⁷ [φα]σιν ¹²⁰ εἶνα[ι] τὴν αἴρεσιν, ἐπιδεικνύσθωσαν τοῖς πολλοῖς ἓνα μόνον ἅπαντα λέγοντες, οὐ πολλοὺς, οὐδὲ πάντας ¹²⁵ ὅσους ἡ κοινὴ φήμη παραδέδωκεν, ἡμῶν οὐ μόνον ὅσους φασὶν οἱ Πανέλληνες ἀλλὰ καὶ πλείονας εἶναι λει³⁰γόντων.

εἶθ’ ὅτι τοιοῦτους οὐδὲ με(με)λλήκασιν ἀπολείπειν οἶους σ[έ]βονταί πάντες, καὶ ἡμεῖς [ὁ]μολοι³⁶³γοῦμεν· ἀνθρωπ[ο]ε[ι]δεῖς γὰρ ἐκείνοι ο [ὅ] νομίζουσιν ἀλλὰ ἀέρας καὶ πνεύματα καὶ αἰ⁵θέρας.

Therefore Zeno’s whole school, if they have left us any divinity at all (as some have left none, and others left none in certain respects) say⁸⁸ that god is one: in other words, the universe, endowed with its

⁸⁴ The main evidence is Ps.-Scymnus 10-14 (*SVF* III Diogenes 11): H. von Arnim, ‘Diogenes (45)’, in *RE* 5 (1905), 773-76 at 774.

⁸⁵ For a list of citations of philosophers in the books from Herculaneum, see the index by T. Dorandi in *Corpus di papiri filosofici* vol. I* (sic), Firenze 1989, esp. 38ff. on Diogenes of Babylon.

⁸⁶ P.Herc. 1428 col. 10 line 8-col. 11 line 5 (cf. Henrichs 1974, 20-1). There is no corresponding passage translated in Cicero, whose critique of the Stoics (placed in the mouth of the Epicurean Velleius) finishes with Diogenes of Babylon (Texts 8a-b above), also the last named philosophical authority in Philodemus’ treatise. In Cicero’s *De natura deorum*, Velleius at this point goes on to give a positive, technical account of the Epicurean gods (I 43-56).

⁸⁷ Henrichs 1974, 21 (cf. 27-8), read here [ὁ]ταν σεμνόν [τι φῶσι]ν.

⁸⁸ i.e., they ‘say’ in effect: Philodemus infers from the Stoic’s views that they in effect hold god to be one.

soul.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, they deceive others into thinking that they leave us with many gods. Therefore, when they deny that their philosophy is impious, let them be revealed to the many to be saying that there is just one deity in total, not many, certainly not all those who are generally held in estimation,⁹⁰ while we⁹¹ assert the existence not only of as many gods as all Hellenic peoples affirm, but also of many more.

Besides, they have not even thought fit to leave us those gods of the form like that in which they are universally worshipped, and with which we are in agreement.⁹² || For they credit no gods in the shape of humans, but only airs and breezes and aethers.

Cicero, by comparison, gives something very different in place of this, a divergence that has long puzzled commentators, but to which I hope to supply a solution, before going on to discuss Philodemus' text. After his summary of the poets' representation of the gods at I 42 (Text 3b above), which as I have argued above corresponds fairly accurately to Philodemus' catalogue of misrepresentations of the gods by the poets, he adds a passage (I 43) which corresponds in a paradoxical way with the passage given above in which Philodemus declares that the Epicureans credit all the gods of the Greeks and more:

Text 10b

Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 43: cum poetarum autem errore coniungere licet portenta magorum Aegyptiorumque in eodem genere dementia, tum etiam vulgi opiniones, quae in maxima inconstantia veritatis ignoratione versantur.

With the lies of the poets may be grouped the bizarre divinings of the Magi and the mad religion of the Egyptians, and also popular beliefs, which amount to a mass of inconsistency derived from ignorance of the truth.

The reference of *portenta Magorum* is probably to Persian divination, most likely by astrology. There is nothing even remotely corresponding to this in Philodemus. The dementia of the Egyptians may refer in this context to the theriomorphism in Egyptian religion. Cicero's *vulgi opiniones*, however, is very likely due to his hasty

⁸⁹ i.e., the soul which the Stoics claim it possesses.

⁹⁰ Literally: 'whom the common report has handed down'.

⁹¹ sc. Epicureans.

⁹² i.e., the Epicureans agree with all men, against the Stoics, that the gods are such as all men worship.

scanning of the previously quoted passage, especially col. 362 ὅσους ἡ κοινὴ φήμη παραδέδωκεν.⁹³ Whether by intention or design, he seems to have rendered as a criticism what was a positive claim for Epicurean theology in Philodemus. Whereas Philodemus says explicitly that the Epicureans uphold the κοινὴ φήμη, adding that they hold that there exist (πάντας θεοὺς) ὅσους φασὶν οἱ Πανέλληνες ἀλλὰ καὶ πλείονας εἶναι. Cicero, by contrast, makes Velleius at exactly this point deride *vulgi opinioniones* as *magna inconstantia*.

The Magi appear nowhere in Philodemus’ account (presumably they are a bit of amplification on Cicero’s part). But interestingly the Egyptians certainly do, most prominently in the next column⁹⁴ in a quotation of the comic poet Timocles from his play *The Egyptians* (PCG 7 Timocles fr. 1.3-4). The fragment, as it happens, deals with the same theme of theromorphism. In the drama, one character exhorts another to wrongdoing in an Egyptian setting (possibly involving the theft of a statue or other valuables from an Egyptian temple, as e.g. in Euripides’ *Iphigenia at Tauris*), saying:

Seeing that the gods, whom all nations credit,
Are so slow to punish the crimes of impious men,
What blasphemer would dread a cat-god’s altar?⁹⁵

Given how summarily Cicero’s rendering at I 41 follows Philodemus’ text on Diogenes of Babylon (Text 8b above), it is easy enough to see how a hasty reading of this passage, out of context, has given rise to Cicero’s characterisation of the *dementia Aegyptiorum*.⁹⁶ The comedy of errors becomes more overt when one realises that in Philodemus the quotation serves to illustrate not the impropriety of Egyptian religion (Cicero’s point), but the point that no-one would refrain from wrong-doing out of fear of an as ineffectual deity as the Stoic god.

⁹³ P.Herc. 1428 col. 10 lines 24-5.

⁹⁴ Col. 365 (= P.Herc. 1428 col. 13 lines 24ff.).

⁹⁵ Literally: ‘When those, who commit impieties against the acknowledged gods, do not very soon pay the penalty for it, whom would the altar of a cat trouble?’ (ὅπου γάρ¹³⁰ φησιν εἰς τοὺς ὁμολογουμένους θεοὺς ἄσεβοῦντες οὐ διδῶσιν εὐθέως δίκην, τίν’ αἰελοῦρου βῶλλμῶς ἐπιτρεῖσκειν ἄν;).

⁹⁶ In *CErc* 14 (1994), 132, I suggested another referent for Cicero’s mention: P.Herc. 242 fr. 3.19-22 (Schober 1988, 81), where the Egyptians are said to worship all their gods as though they were mortal, i.e., susceptible to death. But this comes in an isolated citation in the middle of the catalogue of poets. Cicero is unlikely to have exported a reference to it to his summary of the end of the work, though he may have been reminded of it in his reading of the quotation of Timocles’ *Egyptians* there.

Philodemus' text thus provides valuable testimony on the status of Stoic monotheism.⁹⁷ For Epicurean theology, it provides the additional important testimony that Epicureans hold that there exist all the gods of the Greeks and even more. This commits the Epicureans to the existence of quite a large number, virtually all conceivable divinities,⁹⁸ a remarkable claim, to say the least. It is as though at the mere mention of κοινὴ φήμη all the members of an argument from consensus have been summarily enlisted as honorary Epicurean divinities. We may begin by dismissing several limitations on the import of the claim.

(i) It might be argued that ὅσους φασὶν οἱ Πανέλληνες taken alone and literally means, of course, 'as many gods as the Πανέλληνες say exist', i.e., the same number: thus the Epicureans believe there to be just as many gods, but that they are of a completely different, i.e., philosophically acceptable sort. But I take πάντας to be implied, carried over from πάντας ὅσους ἡ κοινὴ φήμη παραδέδωκεν just above, i.e., the Epicureans say that there exist all gods, as many as the Πανέλληνες claim exist. The emphasis may not even be upon the same number, i.e., not 'exactly the same number', for the force of ὅσους may be as weak as 'such', i.e., the same. Thus, according to Philodemus the Epicureans hold that there exist the same gods as do the Πανέλληνες (and more).

(ii) It might be objected that the gods of the Πανέλληνες are intended to contrast with the πλείονας θεοὺς (also) credited by Epicureans. By πλείονας θεοὺς Philodemus could have in mind the gods of the philosophers, for example as opposed to those of the masses, with Πανέλληνες corresponding to οἱ πολλοί. Alternatively by πλείονας θεοὺς Philodemus could have in mind the gods of non-Greek peoples (like Egyptians? Romans?), as opposed to those of the Πανέλληνες. In *De dis* 3 (col. 14 p. 37 Diels) Philodemus says that when the gods philosophise they must speak Greek, because Greek is the only language in which we have ever heard philosophical discussion conducted. This would seem to rule out that πλείονας refers to

⁹⁷ Cf. Athenag. c. 6 (*SVF* II 1027), which shows that the Stoics' monotheism could make their theology acceptable to Christians, while pagan polytheists seemed atheistic.

⁹⁸ It is not stated, for example, whether or not ὅσους includes the just mentioned πάντας ὅσους ἡ κοινὴ φήμη παραδέδωκεν. But the implication is clearly that it does, and there would be little point in Philodemus' casting these in the teeth of the Stoics if it did not.

the special gods of the philosophers, since these would under this conception be included with the Greek Πανέλληνες.⁹⁹

(iii) It might be objected that the gods of the Πανέλληνες should be restricted to gods always credited by all Greeks, thus only the major gods. In this way they might, for example, be restricted to the gods of the major pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, in the sense for instance that the term Πανέλληνες is later used to designate the Greeks of the later Hellenistic and Roman period as political allies.¹⁰⁰ This might limit the number of divinities credited to something more like what we think of as the Olympic pantheon, or even fewer.¹⁰¹ I.e., gods of civilised Greek peoples, not barbarians. Yet the addition of πλείονας would seem to make the claim ambiguously open-ended, for it extends the list of major Greek divinities to include 'even more'.

(iv) If πλείονας refers to divinities of non-Greek peoples, it might imply an offer on Philodemus' part to include the gods of his Roman patrons in the Epicurean pantheon.¹⁰² But it could hardly have been restricted to these alone. It would in that case include an offer to extend membership, for example, to the divinities of the Greek cities of the East, perhaps even those traditionally worshipped by Egyptians and the Persian Magi, as well as potentially the gods of thieves and poets (inasmuch as these still retained a remnant of the original πρόληψις of divinity).

Whether or not πλείονας θεούς does indicate the gods of non-Greek peoples, this will still be quite a number of divinities. Peoples who failed to believe in gods were hard to find. At *De nat. deor.* I 63 Cotta suspects there must be some, but cannot name any.¹⁰³ Unless Philodemus is simply exercising Epicurean political correctness, the conclusion seems to be unavoidable that by ἡμῶν οὐ μόνον ὅσους φασὶν οἱ Πανέλληνες ἀλλὰ καὶ πλείονας εἶναι λεγόντων Philodemus commits the Epicureans to the existence of an unspecified and

⁹⁹ For Πανέλληνες (and appeals to them as an authoritative basis for inquiry), see Philod. *De rhet.* II 224,8 Sudhaus; *De mus.* 78,13,13 Kemke. Cf. Strabo VIII 6.6; Eur. *Suppl.* 526 τὸν Πανελλήνων νόμον σφῶζων.

¹⁰⁰ So *IG VII* 2721.40 (Hadrianic); id. 5.(1).45.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Πανελλήνιος Ζεὺς, the chief god of the Πανέλληνες at Paus. I 18.9, I 44.9, II 29.8; his festival the Πανελλήνια *IG II*² 1077.14. Later Hadrian himself is like Zeus similarly styled Πανελλήνιος at Athens (*SEG* 32.185).

¹⁰² K. Summers, 'Lucretius and the Epicurean Tradition of Piety', *CPh* 90 (1995), 32-57, notes that Lucretius is markedly more hostile to Roman divinities and cult than Epicurus and Philodemus were to Greek ones.

¹⁰³ Plut. *De comm. not.* 1075a, Diod. 3.9.2, Sext. Emp. *PH* III 234 name only ὀλίγοι τῶν Αἰθιοπῶν.

infinitely large number of gods, such as might be conceived by ordinary peoples. These would include, due to their causal history, many debased or aberrant concepts of divinities, at least as potential divinities. At least Philodemus does not rule out their candidacy, after they have been purged of the accretions of false belief evidenced by the poets, historians, and philosophers set out earlier in *On Piety*. Philodemus does not need to elaborate further on the mechanics of the causal process, whereby mankind formulated ideas of the gods and so received blessings and evils thereby. The idea that according to the Epicureans the gods' existence is due in some respect to human understanding, that they are constituted by our (materially formed) ideas of them, and exclusively so,¹⁰⁴ makes it possible for Philodemus to maintain, here and elsewhere,¹⁰⁵ that the gods can benefit and harm us. And Philodemus is explicit that they can do both.¹⁰⁶

From the fact that the 'gods can benefit and harm us' it does not necessarily follow that the gods exist only as our ideas of them. But since according to Epicurus, the gods cannot intervene in our world, it is impossible that gods existing somewhere independent of our ideas of them could directly intervene to benefit or harm us. The gods benefit us Epicureans indirectly if we get back and stick to 'preconceptions' of them. These preconceptions are our ideas of the

¹⁰⁴ Long and Sedley 1987 I 144-9; further references in Obbink 1996, 11 n. 3. Contra: Mansfeld 1993; G. Giannantoni, 'Epicuro e l'ateismo antico', in *Epicureismo greco e romano* vol. 1, ed. G. Giannantoni e M. Gigante (Naples 1996), 21-63; Santoro 2000, 60-5, 151-2. Mansfeld 1999, 474, though generally in opposition, is more reserved: "I prefer not to argue in favour of either interpretation". Cautious approbation in P. G. Woodward, 'Star Gods in Philodemus', *P.Herc. 152/157*, *CErc* 19 (1989), 29-48; J. Bollack, *La Pensée du Plaisir* (Paris 1975), 236-38; D. N. Sedley, *CR* 29 (1979), 82-84; A. A. Long, 'Epicureans and Stoics', in *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality*, ed. A. H. Armstrong, New York 1986, 135-53 at 142-145; Obbink 1996. Modern reformulations of this view of Epicurean theology stem from G. Schömann, *Schediasma de Epicuri theologia* vol. 4, Greifswald 1864, 346, F. A. Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Iserlohn 1873, 76-77, and W. Scott, 'The Physical Constitution of the Epicurean Gods', *JPh* 12 (1883), 212-47, and were attacked already by E. Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, Leipzig 1909, 451 n. 2. A reconsideration by J. Purinton will appear in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*.

¹⁰⁵ See esp. *De piet.* 1023-59 (Obbink 1996, 176-8).

¹⁰⁶ Philodemus is quite explicit that the gods can both benefit and harm us (see previous note). Erler (in this volume) argues that the gods (according to the right Epicurean view of them) can only benefit us (Frede's view is still different). According to Epicurus, the gods cannot intervene in our world, so that even if it were possible for gods to exist physically independent of our ideas of them, it would be impossible that they could directly benefit or harm us. That Philodemus allows that the gods (in the form of false beliefs) can also harm us shows that it is as our ideas of them that he conceives of the gods doing this.

gods, i.e., culturally and traditionally received opinions of divinity philosophically refined to an acceptable approximation of what they had been for the first humans in civilisation.

It has been objected that these must be preconceptions of what is there, i.e., independently existing divine entities: " 'Self-evident' or 'vivid' knowledge according to Epicurus is only possible of what is real."¹⁰⁷ But of course some of our ideas according to Epicurus do have reality in this sense, and our ideas of many non-corporeal things can benefit us (ideas of virtue, for instance), while our ideas do have a kind of independent material existence in the form of images, exactly what the Epicurean gods are said to consist in by sources both sympathetic and hostile. Knowledge of the gods, like that of virtues, mathematics, qualities, etc. constitutes a reality that supervenes on corporeal physical existence. For this reason Epicurus singled the gods out as a special class of existents. A subsidiary objection¹⁰⁸ that our corporeal concepts are here, in this world, whereas the Epicurus' gods are supposed to have lived somewhere outside the cosmos, is similarly met by the fact that the content of our idea of god fulfils this requirement: we are to think of them as living outside the cosmos. Human psychological processes necessitate that such ideas take their formation here, within the human soul. But where for Epicurus does the abstract concept of virtue, or number, or quality actually reside?

Philodemus, following Epicurus' *Letter to Menoeceus* 124, speaks of them straightforwardly as though they were our gods, capable of benefiting us. Similarly, it is not 'preconceptions' of the gods, but wrong ideas — the preconception plus something else, or in some cases something else alone — which people have about them that cause fear and trembling and so are harmful. For some persons, poets and thieves for example, it is precisely the imagined gods whom they credit who bring them harm in this way. That Philodemus allows that the gods (in the form of false beliefs) can in this way harm us shows that he conceives of the gods in the first instance as our ideas of them.

One might ask why we should not take the further step of positing physically discrete beings residing someplace outside the cosmos, in addition, but corresponding to our ideas of eternally blessed, long-lived creatures who serve for us as paradigms of virtuous behaviour and the good life. Philodemus' silence on the matter does not leave

¹⁰⁷ Mansfeld 1999, 455.

¹⁰⁸ Mansfeld 1999, 474.

open this possibility, for the theology would be incomplete without it. But there is good reason to think that Epicurus would not have licensed such a move. Anyone who (like Cicero at *De natura deorum* I 43-60, long acknowledged to derive from a non-Epicurean source) made it would simply not have progressed so far in Epicurean philosophy. The existence of such beings would be inconsistent with the conditions for indestructibility in the Epicurean universe (on which see Lucretius III 806-23); and Epicurus would not have localised them outside the causal process that allows us to infer the existence of other imperceptible entities in our world.

This is in fact the subject of the passage in Philodemus following almost immediately upon the one given above in 10a:¹⁰⁹

Text 11a

Philod. *De piet.* col. 364:¹¹⁰ μετὰ δὲ ταῦτ' ἐπιδεικτέον αὐτοὺς ὅτι βλά¹¹⁵βης καὶ κακῶν οὐ φασ[ι]ν αἰτίους εἶναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τοὺς θεοὺς[ς]¹¹¹ δοξάζοντας ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἀ[δι]κοι²⁰[π]ραγημάτων, [ὅ]¹¹² ἐνίοι φασιν. ἡμεῖς δὲ καὶ ταῦτ' ἐνίοις ἐξ αὐτῶν λέγομεν παρακολουθεῖν καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ¹²⁵ τὰ μέγιστα· καὶ διότι τὰ θεῖα τοιαῦτα κα[τ]αλείπουσιν καὶ γε(ν)νητὰ καὶ φθαρτὰ φαίνεται, τοῖς δὲ πάντα ¹³⁰ ἡμεῖς ἀκολούθως ἀϊδίους κάφθάρτους ε[ῖ]ναι δογματίζομεν.

In the next place, we must censure them¹¹³ (a) for denying¹¹⁴ that people, who think the gods are the causes of injuries and evil to mankind, abstain (which some say they do) from unjust actions. We, moreover, say that these things¹¹⁵ result for some people because of them¹¹⁶ — and also the greatest of goods! And we must censure them because (b) to those who accept that divinities are of this sort,¹¹⁷ they¹¹⁸ seem capable of being born¹¹⁹ and passing away, whereas we, with uniform consistency, maintain that the gods are eternal and indestructible.

¹⁰⁹ A brief digression on the atheism of Diagoras of Melos intervenes, concluding with a διαίρεσις of different types of atheist (see Obbink 1996, 1-2).

¹¹⁰ P.Herc. 1428 col. 12 lines 13-32 (cf. Henrichs 1974, 22-3).

¹¹¹ Henrichs 1974, 23 who prints a crux here († ου δοξάζοντας). The papyrus shows a small space after ου.

¹¹² Henrichs 1974, 23 restores nothing here, where the papyrus and apograph show space for one letter.

¹¹³ sc. the Stoics.

¹¹⁴ i.e., in effect denying: Philodemus infers that the Stoics' position will lead them to deny this.

¹¹⁵ i.e., injuries and evil, mentioned above.

¹¹⁶ Or: 'follow from them', sc. the gods.

¹¹⁷ i.e., of the sort proposed by the Stoics.

¹¹⁸ sc. the gods.

¹¹⁹ The papyrus reads: 'having a beginning and passing away'.

Philodemus’ rejoinder here is recognisably an echo of Epicurus’ famous (and notoriously corrupt) dictum at *Ad Menoeceum* 123-4, where Epicurus explains that our γνώσις of the gods is ἐναργής, and that κοινή νόησις of them enables us to understand that: ‘the gods are not such as the many believe them to be. For the many do not preserve them, such is their conception of them. The impious man is not he who denies the gods of the many, but he who attaches to gods the beliefs of the many about them’ (οἴους δ’ αὐτοὺς πολλοὶ νομίζουσιν, οὐκ εἰσὶν· οὐ γὰρ φυλάττουσιν αὐτοὺς, οἴους νοοῦσιν. ἀσεβῆς δὲ οὐχ ὁ τοὺς τῶν πολλῶν θεοὺς ἀναιρῶν, ἀλλ’ ὁ τὰς τῶν πολλῶν δόξας θεοῖς προσάπτων). For this the following explanation is immediately given:

Text 11b

Epic. *Ad Men.* 124: οὐ γὰρ προλήψεις εἰσὶν ἀλλ’ ὑπολήψεις ψευδεῖς αἱ τῶν πολλῶν ὑπὲρ θεῶν ἀποφάσεις· ἐνθεν αἱ μέγιστα βλάβαι † αἵτιαι τοῖς κακοῖς † ἐκ θεῶν ἐπάγονται καὶ ὠφέλειαι († τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς) addidit Gassendi). ταῖς γὰρ ἰδίαις οἰκειούμενοι διὰ παντὸς ἀρεταῖς τοὺς ὁμοίους ἀποδέχονται, πᾶν τὸ μὴ τοιοῦτον ὡς ἀλλότριον νομίζοντες.

For they (sc. the gods of the many) are not προλήψεις (‘preconceptions’) but false suppositions, the assertions of the many about gods. It is through them that the greatest evils < > stem from gods, and benefits too. For having a total affinity for their own virtues, they are receptive to those who are like them, and consider alien all that is not of that kind.¹²⁰

In what is a remarkable near-quotation of what is probably the most textually vexed passage in Epicurus, Philodemus (Text 11a above) with the phrase βλάβαι¹⁵ καὶ κακῶν οὐ φασ[ι]ν αἰτίους ... κα[ι] τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὰ μέγιστα recalls Epicurus’ *Ad Men.* 124 μέγιστα βλάβαι ... ἐκ θεῶν ἐπάγονται καὶ ὠφέλειαι. The correspondence makes it virtually escapable that αἵτιαι (long held in suspicion in our text of Epicurus’ letter here) appeared in Philodemus’ text of Epicurus as well, implicating the gods in an account of causes of goods and evils to humans.¹²¹

That Epicurus held that we have a πρόληψις of the gods is well attested from other sources. According to Philod. *De piet.* 224-31 (p. 120 Obbink 1996) he stated in book 12 of *On Nature* that the ‘first

¹²⁰ Text and interpretation: Obbink 1996, 458-64.

¹²¹ Philodemus’ phraseology recommends the emendation of βλάβαι (and perhaps ὠφέλειαι) to the genitive in Epic. *Ad Men.* 124 (so already von der Mühl).

men' *πρῶτοι ἄνθρωποι* already held such a conception, after which it underwent debasement by false opinion. That our *γνώσις* of the gods is potentially *ἐναργής* implies that our primary conceptions of the gods have a sound causal origin in the deliverances of perception, i.e., in materially formed images, for Epicurus the only immediate objects of perception. No doubt Epicurus' assertion was intended to be as provocative as his related one that 'all perceptions are true'. By extending the claim to the gods, Philodemus seems to mean that the Epicureans allow the conceptual existence of gods of ordinary Greek people, at any rate those based on (or reducible to) *προλήψεις*. In so doing he underscores the notion that every conception of a god results from the formation of concepts from images, some of which have a long and complex cultural history. Only in this way (i.e., via our ideas) could the gods come to be the causes of harm or benefit to humans, without violating the first of the *Kyriai Doxai*.

Sense and syntax of this reading of Text 11a find further confirmation in col. 365, where Philodemus resumes a digression, saying: 'Even if they were to represent the gods as causing harm and benefit (which they do not), it will be shown that the second point does not follow; for it is clear that no-one ever refrained from unjust action out of fear of the air or the aether or the whole universe . . .' (at this point the quotation from Timocles' *Egyptians* discussed above is then adduced for illustrations).¹²² The 'second point' is clearly the assertion that the Stoics in effect 'deny that people, who think the gods are the causes of injuries and evil to mankind, abstain (which some say they do) from unjust actions'. In contrast to the Epicureans, Philodemus claims, his Stoic opponents implicitly hold that the gods do not benefit or harm men.¹²³

XI. Conclusion

Several problems (at least) remain: What about Philodemus' previous criticism or even denial (so Cic. *De nat. deor.* I 42) of the divinity of

¹²² P.Herc. 1428 col. 13 lines 1-15 (for the text see Henrichs 1974, 23-4).

¹²³ Philodemus himself, however, stops short of advocating that if people in general are restrained from wrong-doing by the belief that the gods directly harm wrong-doers, they should be given to think that the gods really exist as represented by the poets. For an expanded treatment, see Philod. *De piet.* 1184-1217 and 2145-82 (Obbink 1996, 186-8, 252-4). Epicurus clearly held that he who had deficient gods would have deficient ethics.

the gods of the poets and philosophers, and what of the type of divinity claimed by the Stoics, but categorically denied to be a god by Philodemus? To these there is an easy and single answer. A familiar complaint in Philodemus is that the poets and philosophers reduce the gods to some entity or principle, usually inanimate and non-anthropomorphic, or corruptible and perishable. In doing so they not only violate *KD* 1, but also fail to use words in their most common and natural senses, as Epicurus had admonished.¹²⁴ The gods of the poets criticised by Philodemus are not in this case gods at all, nor the proper concepts (προλήψεις) which potentially constitute the gods as ἐνότητες,¹²⁵ but ὑπολήψεις ψευδεῖς, the products of reductionism, the confusion from which would make it impossible for gods themselves to exist. It is this process of reductionism which Philodemus terms συνουκείωσις. Epicurus held that the shifting of these boundaries in language and (consequently) thought obliterates a sense of limit that signposts recognised distinctions in the world.¹²⁶

Further confirmation of the gods' existence as divine entities (ἐνότητες) by thought may be sought in other books of the Herculaneum library, like Philodemus *De dis*. An important text is Demetrius Laco, *De forma dei*,¹²⁷ which gives in a number of passages Epicurus' explanation of how 'the divine (τὸ θεῖον) differs from ordinary perceptible ἐνότητες in that the divine endures for all time,'¹²⁸ and 'perpetually undergoes a complete exchange of material elements which form the intellect ... and preserves the memories of other ἐνότητες'.¹²⁹ When Demetrius describes the gods as having a ὑπόστασις,¹³⁰ we might be tempted to conclude that he

¹²⁴ *De rhet.* ap. D.L. X 13; for gods: *Ad Herod.* 77, and *KD* 1.

¹²⁵ For the Epicurean gods' status as 'unities' see on Philod. *De piet.* 209-19 and 349 (Obbink 1996, 301, 330); Mansfeld 1999, 473-4.

¹²⁶ Obbink 1994, 111-12.

¹²⁷ New edition in Santoro 2000, who argues in her introduction (60-5) that Demetrius regards the gods as existing independently of our ideas of them because, like Epicurus (e.g. *Ad Men.* 123), he holds the gods to be living and perceiving entities: and so he does, but his concern throughout is with the processes of analogy and memory that enable us to think of the gods as such, which suggests precisely the opposite.

¹²⁸ Col. 8.

¹²⁹ Col. 13: τῆς ὕλης καθάπαξ ἀλλατομένης τῶν τὸν νοῦν ἀποτελούντων, τὰς μ[νή]μας σωθήσεσ[θαι] τ[ῶνδ'] ἐ[ν]οτήτων.

¹³⁰ Col. 15, i.e., a concrete physical rather than purely noetic existence. However nothing that Demetrius says requires that this instantiation is anything other than theoretical to the purpose of setting out what the gods must be like (see below).

thinks they are biologically living entities.¹³¹ But what Demetrius actually says is that we must attribute to god (συνάπτωμεν τῷ θεῷ) the characteristic of human form, in order for them to take on an existence that is consistent with reason: ἵνα καὶ σὺν λογ[ι]σμῶι τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχη.

The second question is more difficult. After Epicurus' trademark pronouncements in *KD* 1 and *Ad Herodotum* 77, why should the Epicureans want to let back in gods who do harm and benefit to humans in any form? Presumably this is due to the fact that the notion that the gods do in some way confer harm and benefit was sufficiently long-lived to form part of the κοινὴ νόησις of God, which Epicurus felt obliged to uphold (so *Ad Menoeceum* 123).¹³² It was sustainable in the proposition that what we say about the gods is responsible for what we think about them,¹³³ and that it is only in the form of our ideas that the gods can benefit and harm us.¹³⁴ The lingering commitment to it reminds us that Epicureanism is a philosophy that starts with acculturated views and proceeds by stripping away accretions until some acceptable natural state is achieved. We are reminded that 'Epicureanism is in a sense about returning human beings to their natural state by stripping from them the false beliefs that have corrupted them, rather than simply providing them with a rich new belief-set.'¹³⁵

To sum up, Philodemus' approach to the history of theology is not purely negative and destructive. The philosophical armature is not terribly sophisticated. We find out what the gods are not like, and in the process false conceptions are paired down to an acceptable minimum of the distortion Epicurus called παιδεία. These gods exist, and our knowledge of them is clear and true. In the course of his exposition Philodemus makes some provocative assertions and disclaimers that clarify points of Epicurean doctrine. When he declares that Epicurus (unlike the Stoics who acknowledge a single principle as god) holds that the gods of ordinary men are in a sense

¹³¹ As does Santoro 2000, 151-2.

¹³² Another reason is that the goods provided by the gods are not just any goods but especially choiceworthy, μέγιστα, and therefore provide ethically preferable katastematic pleasure.

¹³³ *Ad Herodotum* 77, for example, lays down restrictions on the kind of ὀνόματα to be used of the gods, against the penalty of mental disquiet.

¹³⁴ If at all: *KD* 1.

¹³⁵ D. P. Fowler, 'The Didactic Plot', in M. Depew and D. Obbink (eds.), *Matrices of Genre*, Cambridge, Mass. 2000, 205-19 at 217.

true, he has in mind a distinct program integrating Epicurean theology with Epicurean ethics and epistemology.¹³⁶

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¹³⁶ I am most grateful for the shrewd comments and criticism of M. Frede, A. Laks, and J. Mansfeld.

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PLUTARCH AND GOD:
THEODICY AND COSMOGONY IN THE THOUGHT OF
PLUTARCH

JOHN DILLON

In the case of a figure such as Plutarch of Chaeronea, it becomes a serious problem for exegesis to distinguish what is personal from what he may have inherited from his tradition, which is, of course, the Platonic tradition. Plutarch was, after all, in his own mind, a faithful Platonist, even though he is conscious of going against the grain of tradition in at least some respects.¹ And yet he seems to us in many respects idiosyncratic, to the extent that some are hesitant to grant him the status of a Platonist at all² — though this position is based on the illusory notion that there existed in his day some secure repository of Platonist ‘orthodoxy’ to which he could be opposed.

I would like to focus, on this occasion, on two aspects in particular of Plutarch’s theology, which between them seem to characterize it most distinctively, his dualism (under which rubric I would rank both his identification of an ‘evil’ or negative power in the universe, and his postulation of a secondary, ‘demiurgic’ divinity somehow contrasted with the highest god); and his conception of divine providence (with which is associated his belief in a temporal creation of the world).

Before, however, turning to his positive doctrine, it may not be out of place, in view of the overall theme of this symposium, to consider briefly Plutarch’s relationship with the major theological system of the Hellenistic era proper, that of the Stoics.³ There is in fact much in the Stoic position with which Plutarch would agree, such as the

¹ Notably, of course, on the question of the literal interpretation of the *Timaeus* account of the creation of the world in time, and the postulation of a pre-cosmic, disorderly, ‘evil’, soul which is attendant on that.

² E.g. Dörrie 1971, 36-56. Dörrie assumes here a tradition of ‘Schulplatonismus’, to which Plutarch is somehow external, which seems to me an unjustified assumption.

³ This topic has been dealt with, thoroughly and well, by Daniel Babut, in ch. IV of his great work *Plutarque et le Stoïcisme*, Paris 1969, to which the interested reader is referred for details.

doctrine that God is 'a living being, immortal, rational, perfect or intelligent in happiness, admitting into himself nothing evil, taking providential care of the world and all that is in it, but not of human shape.'⁴ All of this would be common ground between Stoics and Platonists; where Plutarch differs from the Stoics, and differs profoundly, is on the question of the divinity's materiality (despite the virtual immateriality of the $\pi\upsilon\rho$ νοερόν of which it is composed), and on the periodic destructibility of all the gods, including, of course, the heavenly bodies, except Zeus himself (as representing the World-Soul), at the ἐκπύρωσις. His opposition to this aspect of Stoic theology comes out most clearly, perhaps, in the polemical context of his *De Stoicorum Repugnantibus* (1051Eff.), but it surfaces at many points in his works. He is not here, of course, being quite fair to the Stoics, for whom the gods other than Zeus are really just aspects of one single divine power, 'which takes on different names according to the places in which it appears and the functions which it assumes';⁵ thus what is essential survives the *ekpyrōsis*, subsuming all other matter into itself. What Plutarch really objects to here is the concept of the *ekpyrōsis* in general, since that goes against the Platonist assumption of the eternity of the heavenly realm. Polemics apart, however, Plutarch's view of the supreme deity is rather more of a development of the Stoic one, in the direction of complete transcendence and immateriality, than a direct contradiction of it.

That said, let us look first, before turning to details, at a basic statement of Plutarch's view of the supreme deity, from the dialogue *On the E at Delphi*.⁶ It is actually put in the mouth of his teacher, Ammonius, but there can be little doubt that it is a formulation that Plutarch himself would approve (*De E* 393AB):

But God *is* — if there be need to say so! — and he exists for no stretch of time (*khronos*), but for eternity (*aiōn*) which is immovable, timeless and undeviating, in which there is no earlier or later, no future nor past, no older nor younger; but he, being 'One', has with only one 'now' completely filled 'forever'; and only when Being is

⁴ Diogenes Laertius VII 147 (= *SVF* II 1021): θεὸν δ' εἶναι ζῶον ἀθάνατον, λογικόν, τέλειον ἢ νοερόν ἐν εὐδαιμονίᾳ, κακοῦ παντὸς ἀνεπίδεκτον, προνοητικὸν κόσμου τε καὶ τῶν ἐν κόσμῳ μὴ εἶναι μέντοι ἀνθρωπόμορφον.

⁵ *SVF* II 1021; 1027; 1070 — this last from Servius, *ad Georg.* I 5; with which, however, Plutarch would not entirely agree, as we shall see, since Servius states, among other equivalences, that the Stoics equate the Sun, Apollo, and Dionysus, something that Plutarch does not wish to do.

⁶ This passage, at least insofar as it concerns the supreme god, is well discussed, and its sources investigated, by Whittaker 1969.

after his pattern is it in reality Being, not having been nor about to be, nor has it a beginning nor is it destined to come to an end.⁷

(trans. F.C. Babbitt, slightly altered)

This impressive statement of Platonist faith — quoted later with approval by Christian authorities such as Eusebius (*PE* XI 11) and Cyril of Alexandria (in his polemic against Julian, *Adv. Jul.* VIII) — combines terminology from the *Timaeus* and the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides* to produce a classic characterization of the Platonic first principle. However, in close proximity to this we find sentiments that are distinctly unplatonic — though not, perhaps, so very out of line with developments in Platonism in the second century C.E.

Ammonius goes on immediately (393BC) to extol the essential unity and simplicity of the supreme God, whom he identifies with Apollo rather than Zeus⁸, but then proceeds to exempt him from any direct involvement with the multifariousness and changeability of the physical world. Our world of change is presided over by another, inferior divinity, whom he identifies with Pluto or Hades (393F-394A). It is impious, and indeed absurd, to suggest — here a dig at the Stoics⁹ — that the supreme god produces alterations in himself (turning himself into fire, for example) or in the world as a whole, like a child building sand-castles and then knocking them down again¹⁰:

For on the contrary, in respect of anything whatever that has come to be in this world, for this¹¹ he binds together its substance and prevails

⁷ Ἄλλ' ἔστιν ὁ θεός, εἰ χρή φάναι, καὶ ἔστι κατ' οὐδένα χρόνον ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τὸν ἀκίνητον καὶ ἀνέγκλιτον καὶ οὐ πρότερον οὐδὲν ἔστιν οὐδ' ὕστερον οὐδὲ μέλλον οὐδὲ παρωχημένον οὐδὲ πρεσβύτερον οὐδὲ νεώτερον· ἀλλ' εἰς ὃν ἐνὶ τῷ νῦν τὸ αἰεὶ πεπλήρωκε, καὶ μόνον ἔστι τὸ κατὰ τοῦτ' ὄντως ὄν, οὐ γεγονὸς οὐδ' ἐσόμενον οὐδ' ἀρξάμενον οὐδὲ πανσόμενον.

⁸ The dialogue is, admittedly, concerned with Apollo, but this is still odd; it appears to be a Neopythagorean notion, based on the etymology of *Apollon* as 'not-many', and thus to be identified with the Monad, cf. *De Is.* 354F.

⁹ This picks up in an interesting way an earlier passage, 388E-389B, where Plutarch himself is speaking, which makes a similar contrast between Apollo and Dionysus, where the Stoic doctrine of *ekpyrōsis*, and in general of the concept of the supreme god as an immanent entity, is more explicitly attacked.

¹⁰ This image from Homer (*Iliad* XV 362-4) is particularly well chosen, since the point of comparison is in fact Apollo knocking down the wall of the Achaeans. One wonders if Plutarch is aware of a Stoic-inspired allegorization of this passage.

¹¹ There is unfortunately a slight textual problem here, though the sense seems clear enough (albeit mistranslated by Babbitt). I take ὅσον as subject of ἐγγέγονε (no need, I think, to emend to ὁ θεῖον with Harder). and read τοῦτω (with the corrector of *Marc* 250, and Pohlenz) for the τοῦτο of the mss., which goes ill with τὴν οὐσίαν.

over its corporeal weakness, which tends towards dissolution¹². And it seems to me right to address to the god the words, 'Thou art,'¹³ which are most opposed to this account, and testify against it, believing that never does any vagary or transformation take place near him, but that such acts and experiences are related to some other god, or daemon, whose office is concerned with nature in dissolution and generation.¹⁴

(trans. Babbitt, emended)

He goes on to contrast this secondary deity with Apollo by means of a comparative study of their epithets: Apollo 'not-many', Δήλιος (interpreted as 'clear'), Φοῖβος (interpreted as 'bright'), and so on; Pluto is Πλούτων, in the sense of 'abounding in wealth', and so in multiplicity, 'Αιδωνεύς ('unseen'), and Σκότιος, 'dark'. A strong opposition is thus set up, but it is not, after all, a contrast between two radically opposed forces.¹⁵ That we get elsewhere in Plutarch — and I shall get to that — but not here. What we have here is a contrast between a primary and secondary god, and it is a most interesting one, as it seems to signal the first appearance of an entity which enjoys quite a flourishing existence in later periods of Platonism, the sublunary demiurge.

This personage first appears as such, so far as I know, in the system of Iamblichus, some two hundred years after Plutarch,¹⁶ but already

¹² There seems here to be an echo of the role of Kronos in the myth of the *Politicus*. We may note that the verb *syndeō* is used of the activity of the Statesman later in the work (309B), which may be significant.

¹³ A reference to the mysterious *E* (interpreted here as εἶ) on the portal of the temple of Apollo, which is what the dialogue is about.

¹⁴ τουναντίον γὰρ ὅσον ἀμωσγέπως ἐγγέγονε τῷ κόσμῳ, τοῦτ'α συνδεῖ τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ κρατεῖ τῆς περὶ τὸ σωματικὸν ἀσθενείας ἐπὶ φθορὰν φερομένης. καὶ μοι δοκεῖ μάλιστα πρὸς τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἀντιταττόμενον τὸ ῥήμα καὶ μαρτυρόμενον 'εἶ' φάναι πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ὡς οὐδέποτε γινομένης περὶ αὐτὸν ἐκστάσεως καὶ μεταβολῆς, ἀλλ' ἐτέρῳ τινὶ θεῷ μᾶλλον δὲ δαίμονι τεταγμένῳ περὶ τὴν ἐν φθορᾷ καὶ γενέσει φύσιν τοῦτο ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν προσήκον.

¹⁵ One might well ask the question (and I am indebted to Charles Brittain for actually asking it) as to the precise force of the term *daimōn* in this context. Not, certainly, the normal Platonic one of 'messenger between god and man', as defined at *Symp.* 202E. The term *daimōn* always bears, at least in later Greek, a connotation of inferiority to *theos*, though not necessarily any imputation of evil. Hades/Plouton is certainly not a deity with positive connotations in Greek thought, but he is not here being charged with anything other than mutability, and perhaps a touch of deception. An interesting analogue to this usage occurs in a late treatise of Plotinus (*Enn.* II 3, 9, 46ff.), where the universe with the higher soul included is denominated *theos*, but without it a *daimōn megas* (using precisely the terminology which Plato uses to describe Eros in the *Symposium* (202d13)).

¹⁶ Specifically in his exegesis of Plato's *Sophist*, the subject (σκοπός) of which we know him to have declared to be precisely this entity (*Scholia Platonica*, ed. W.C. Greene, p. 40 = Iambl. *In Soph.* Fr. 1 Dillon), whom he also declares that Plato

in the second century the Neopythagorean Numenius was postulating a secondary, demiurgic deity inferior to and contrasted in his activity with the primal, 'paternal' deity, while lurking in the background, already in Plutarch's time, is the sinister figure of the Gnostic demiurge. We may note, however, in this connexion Plutarch's own testimony, in the ninth of the *Platonic Questions*,¹⁷ that Xenocrates already distinguished between a 'higher' and a 'lower' Zeus (Ζεὺς ὑπατος, Ζεὺς νέατος), the former of whom presides 'in the realm of the ever-unchanging' (ἐν τοῖς κατὰ ταῦτα καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχουσιν),¹⁸ while the latter, who is identified with Hades, rules the realm below the moon, so that the opposition between these two entities would seem to go back all the way to the Old Academy.¹⁹

Such an entity, however, as I say, though strongly contrasted in the present passages with the supreme god, is by no means necessarily an 'evil' or purely negative force. The figure represented in this dialogue by Dionysus or Hades/Pluto is responsible for the multiplicity, changeability and illusoriness characteristic of the physical, sublunary world — what in Hindu thought would be termed *mâyâ* — but this is a necessary aspect of the universe as a whole, and not condemned as such. He weaves a veil of appearance around the embodied soul, but the soul of the accomplished sage is quite welcome to escape from this if he can, by simply seeing through it (in Hindu terms, *moksha*, 'enlightenment') — and accompanying this insight with a moderately restrained life-style (Plutarch was no extreme ascetic, as we know!).

himself identifies with Hades — something that he does not in fact do, though Proclus repeats this assertion, at *In Crat.* CLIX. We may note, in this connexion, that John Laurentius Lydus reports (*Mens.* p. 83, 13ff.) the postulation by Iamblichus, in an unidentified work, of a μέγιστος δαίμων, presiding over the various tribes of sublunary daemons, whom he identifies with Pluto. This entity is presumably the same as the hero of the *Sophist*.

¹⁷ *Quaest. Plat.* IX 1, 1007F = Xenocrates, Fr. 18 Heinze/216 Isnardi Parente.

¹⁸ This, of course, is a good Platonic way of describing the supercelestial and immaterial realm of the Forms, which would leave the ruler of the celestial realm unaccounted for, and, since the context in which Plutarch gives us this snippet of lore involves a discussion of the mutual relations of the *three* parts of the soul, it has been suggested that Xenocrates also postulated an intermediate Zeus who would have ruled over the celestial realm; but Plutarch makes no mention of such an entity, as he very well might have, had there been one.

¹⁹ We may note the promotion of Hades to the sublunar realm, as attested also in the *De Facie* 942F and 943C and elsewhere (Persephone-Kore now being identified with the Moon). This must also go back to the Old Academy at least, if not to fifth or fourth century Pythagoreanism. Cf. W. Burkert's discussion in *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, Cambridge, Mass., 1972, 357-68. Plutarch's earlier identification of this entity with Dionysus (389A) is no problem, as Dionysus is connected with Hades as far back as Heraclitus (Fr. 15 DK).

Such a figure seems to me to be almost necessarily called into being in the Platonist tradition by the progressive transcendentalisation of the supreme principle, from at least the time of Eudorus of Alexandria on. As the first god is seen as ever more unitary and impassive, so the need is progressively created for another deity who is prepared to get his hands dirty, so to speak, and take on a more active role in the creation and administration of the universe, particularly the lowest part of it. In other Platonist systems, such an entity may be represented as a Stoic-style Logos — as in that adopted by the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, for example, and, it would seem, by Plutarch himself, in the *Isis and Osiris* (to be discussed further below); or as a secondary demiurge, as in the system adopted by the Neopythagorean Numenius. Such a mediating and hands-on role as Plutarch envisages here, however, is really more appropriate to the daemonic level of being (though indeed something like it is attributed to the ‘Young Gods’ in the *Timaeus*), and it is significant that in Ammonius’ speech this figure is referred to as ‘some other god, or rather daemon.’ Even so, much later, Iamblichus is reported by Lydus as characterizing his sublunary Pluto as μέγιστος δαίμων (see above, n. 16).

The problem presents itself, however, as to how far this remarkable doctrine can be claimed as Plutarch’s own. Certainly, Plutarch puts it, not into his own mouth, but into that of his revered master, and it has been suggested that this is really a piece of quasi-Gnostic lore picked up by Ammonius in his native Egypt, and alien to true Platonism.²⁰ But this will not quite do, I think. Earlier in the same dialogue, after all, as we have seen (388Eff.), Plutarch himself makes a very similar contrast between Apollo and Dionysus (in the course of a critique of Stoic materialist theology), though admittedly leaving it vague whether he regards them, as do those he is criticizing, as two distinct entities, or just two aspects of the one deity.²¹

The Stoics, it seems, while representing Apollo as the ‘not-many’ and the ‘pure’ (taking his title Φοῖβος in this sense), regard him as the cosmic fire, which, adopting the doctrine of Heraclitus, they describe as changing into all other substances, ‘winds and water,

²⁰ E.g. Norden 1912, 182ff.

²¹ Moreover, for the confusion of those who might wish to dismiss this as a doctrine to be attributed to Ammonius, but not to Plutarch himself, this contrast between Apollo and Hades recurs at *Lat. Viv.* 1130A, where there is no suggestion that it is the doctrine of anyone other than Plutarch.

earth and stars, and into the generation of plants and animals', but then in due course (at the *ekpyrōsis*) back into fire. Plutarch merely reports this view as that of 'the more sophisticated of the theologians' (τῶν θεολόγων... οἱ σοφώτεροι, 388F) as background to an explanation of why the number five is appropriate to Apollo: five is a number which, however often it is added to itself or multiplied, always produces a ten or a five — that is to say, a number ending in zero or five — the former symbolizing perfection, or the totality of things, the latter its own pure state.

Now this is all very well, but it depends on a thoroughly Stoic view of the nature of God, as pure fire,²² immanent in the world, and consuming the world at intervals, which is a doctrine that Plutarch himself, as a Platonist, cannot possibly accept. I would suggest, therefore, that the opposition set up here between Apollo and Dionysus serves as a sort of intimation of the later contrast between Apollo and Hades/Pluto, and that it is the latter contrast that commands Plutarch's assent. Plutarch's God, after all, is a totally transcendent, immaterial, immutable entity, who cannot be directly involved in the transformations of the elements, so that the Dionysiac force at work in the world must be other than the supreme deity.

This, then, is one species of dualism characteristic of Plutarch's theology; the other, starker, and better-known one remains to be examined. For this we may best turn to the treatise *On Isis and Osiris*, where it is set out in the context of the exegesis of one of the central myths of Egyptian religion, that of the kidnapping and dismemberment of Osiris by Typhon, and his gathering-up and reconstitution by his mother Isis. The better to characterize Typhon and what he stands for, Plutarch introduces, as an analogy, the two chief principles of Persian religion, Ahura Mazda and Ahriman (or, as he terms them, Oromazes and Areimanius). The passage in which he does so is worth quoting, I think, at some length (369B-D):

There has, therefore, come down from theologians and lawgivers to both poets and philosophers²³ this ancient belief which is of anonymous origin, but is given strong and tenacious credence, and has been widely transmitted to barbarians and Greeks not only in sayings and reports but also in rites and offering-festivals, namely that the

²² It seems from the evidence of Macrobius (*Sat.* I 17, 7 = *SVF* II 1095) that this etymology is to be attributed to Chrysippus.

²³ He has just quoted Heraclitus, B51 D-K, on the *παλίντονος ἀρμονίη* of the universe, and a fragment from the *Aeolus* of Euripides (Fr. 21 Nauck).

universe is not kept on high of itself without mind and reason and guidance, nor is it only one reason that rules and directs it in the manner of rudders and curbing reins, but that many powers do who are a mixture of evil and good. Rather, since nature, to be plain, contains nothing that is unmixed, it is not one steward that dispenses our affairs for us, as though mixing drinks from two jars in a hotel.²⁴ Life and the cosmos, on the contrary — *if not the whole of the cosmos, at least the terrestrial portion below the moon* (ὁ περίγειος οὐτός καὶ μετὰ σελήνην), *which is heterogeneous, variegated and subject to many changes* — are compounded of two opposite principles and of two antithetic powers (ἀπὸ δυεῖν ἐναντίων ἀρχῶν καὶ δυεῖν ἀντιπάλων δυνάμεων), one of which leads by a straight path to the right, while the other reverses and bends back. For if nothing comes into being without a cause, and if good could not provide the cause of evil, then nature must contain in itself the creation and origin of evil as well as good.

(trans. J. Gwyn Griffiths, slightly emended)

This passage deserves close scrutiny. Certainly, we have here the postulation of two opposed principles or powers, and as this serves as a lead-in to the introduction of Oromazes and Areimanius into the discussion, it would seem plain enough that we are in the presence of a strongly dualist system; but there are complications.

First of all, if we cast our minds back to the ‘weakly’ dualistic system adumbrated in the *De E*, the italicized section of the passage quoted above might seem to take on a certain significance. Here the dualism is modified by the qualification, “if not the whole cosmos, at least the terrestrial portion below the moon”, as if Plutarch were after all unwilling, as a good Platonist, to postulate evil in the intelligible, and even in the celestial, realms. Furthermore, in his discussion of the Persian system, he reports that, although the basic system involves the postulation of two rival deities (θεοὶ.. δύο καθάπερ ἀντίτεχνοι), Zoroaster himself prefers to term the positive principle a god, but the negative one a daemon (369D). Now, irrespective of what reality in Zoroastrianism Plutarch may be reflecting here,²⁵ it is significant, I think, that he should make mention of this implicit downgrading of Areimanius, as it fits in well with what appears to be his position elsewhere.

²⁴ A reference, mediated through Plato (*Rep.* 379D), to Achilles’ famous utterance in *Iliad* XXIV 527-8.

²⁵ There is dispute on this question as between Benveniste 1929, ch. 4, and Zaehner 1961. Zaehner feels that Plutarch may be describing the later, Avestan form of the religion, where strong dualism had been considerably modified, and Ahura Mazda is established as a supreme god. I would be happy to accept this suggestion, but am not competent to comment.

As a help in explicating that, we may adduce next his curious remark that the better principle 'leads by a straight path to the right, while the other reverses and bends back' (τῆς μὲν ἐπὶ τὰ δεξιὰ καὶ κατ' εὐθεΐαν ὑφηγουμένης, τῆς δ' ἔμπαλιν ἀναστρεφούσης καὶ ἀνακλώ-σης). What this sounds like is a reference to the two circles out of which the world-soul — and secondarily, the individual soul — is formed in the *Timaeus*, the circles of the Same and of the Other, which Plutarch, in his essay *On the Generation of the Soul in the Timaeus* (e.g. 1016C, 1026A-C) identifies respectively as Intellect and the irrational, disorderly soul which he sees as pre-existing the creation of the cosmos. Indeed, at 1026B he precisely relates this pair, not only to Empedocles' Love and Strife, the Heraclitean tension of the bow and the lyre, and Parmenides' Light and Darkness, but to Zoroaster's 'god and daemon, the former called by him Oromasdes, the latter Areimanius.'²⁶

The picture, it seems to me, begins to come together here. If Areimanius is to be equated merely with the disorderly soul of the *Timaeus*, he cannot be regarded as by any means the equal of the supreme principle. The disorderly soul, in Plutarch's system, is admittedly much more than a passive material principle: it is actively disruptive, and has to be constantly reduced to order by demiurgic rationality, but it is also very definitely subordinate to the supreme god, and even to his Logos, which is how Plutarch saw the circle of the Same in the soul.

This attribution to Plutarch of what one might term a Logos-theology may well raise some eyebrows, and indeed has done so in the past, when I asserted it in *The Middle Platonists* (Dillon 1977, 200-2), but, unless one is resolved to reject the theological scheme set out in the *Isis and Osiris* as anomalous, there really is no escaping from it. A *logos* is mentioned in the *Proc. An.* (1016B), along with 'rational life and concord', as 'guiding necessity that has been tempered by persuasion,'²⁷ but that could be dismissed, perhaps, as no more than a turn of phrase. Not so, however, the scenario presented in the *Isis*

²⁶ This list of authorities, which Plutarch produces also in the *de Iside*, 370 D-F, can be seen to derive ultimately from Aristotle, *Met.* A 3-6, 984b33-988a17, but through the filter of a later dualistic philosophical source, which is identified, persuasively, by Pier-Luigi Donini with Eudorus of Alexandria ('Plutarco e i metodi dell' exegesi filosofica,' in *I Moralia di Plutarco tra Filologia e Filosofia*, edd. I. Gallo & R. Laurentini, Napoli 1992, 79-96. I am indebted for this reference to Jaap Mansfeld.

²⁷ ζωή τε τοῦ παντός ἐστὶν ἔμφρων καὶ ἁρμονία καὶ λόγος ἄγων πεπιθὸς μεμιγμένην ἀνάγκην...

and Osiris. Here the figure of Osiris is central to the economy of the treatise, and Osiris is certainly the Logos of the supreme god — at least in his lower aspect, for Plutarch makes a remarkable distinction between the ‘soul’ and the ‘body’ of Osiris. At 373AB there occurs a passage of allegorical exegesis which deserves quotation at some length:

It is not, therefore, without reason that they relate in their myth that the soul of Osiris is eternal and indestructible (αἰδῖος καὶ ἄφθαρτος), but that his body is frequently dismembered and destroyed by Typhon, whereupon Isis in her wanderings searches for it and puts it together again. For what truly is and is intelligible and good (τὸ γὰρ ὄν καὶ νοητὸν καὶ ἀγαθόν) is superior to destruction and change; but the images (εἰκόνες) which the perceptible and corporeal nature fashions from it, and the reason-principles (λόγοι), forms and likenesses which this nature takes to itself, are like figures stamped on wax in that they do not endure for ever. They are seized by the element of disorder and confusion which is driven here from the region above and fights against Horus,²⁸ whom Isis brings forth as a sense-perceptible image of the intelligible world.²⁹ This is why he is said to be charged with illegitimacy by Typhon as one who is neither pure nor genuine like his father, who is himself and in himself the unmixed and impassive reason-principle (λόγος αὐτὸς καθ’ ἑαυτὸν ἀμιγής καὶ ἀπαθής), but is made spurious by matter through the corporeal element. He (sc. Horus) overcomes and wins the day, since Hermes, that is the principle of reason (λόγος),³⁰ is a witness for him and points out that nature produces the world after being remodelled in accordance with the intelligible (πρὸς τὸ νοητόν).

(trans. Griffiths, slightly emended)

Again, there is much of interest in this passage, but in the present context we must focus on the role and status of Seth-Typhon. He is obviously an ‘evil’ principle distinct from Isis, who is portrayed, in accordance with Plutarch’s general view,³¹ as a principle essentially

²⁸ Horus in the myth is son of Osiris by Isis.

²⁹ I read here, with the generality of the mss., εἰκόνα τοῦ νοητοῦ κόσμου αἰσθητὸν ὄντα, despite the hiatus between κόσμου and αἰσθητὸν, as it gives a better word-order than the κόσμον of Vind. 46, adopted by Sieveking and Griffiths, but the general sense is not affected.

³⁰ There is something of a problem here, since Osiris has just been presented as the Logos, and is so, in the strict sense. We must take Hermes (Thoth), I think, as simply a projection of Osiris — or perhaps, as Griffiths 1967, 505, suggests just as “reason in a more general sense of the word.” Plutarch’s apparent sloppiness in exegesis here may be partly justified by the fact that Hermes is widely interpreted as a logos-figure in the Greek allegorical tradition (cf. e.g. Cornutus, *ND* 16, p. 23, 16-22 Lang; Heraclitus, *Alleg. Hom.* 72.4-19; Plot. *Enn.* III 6 19, 25-30).

³¹ As presented, for instance, in the *Proc. An.* On Plutarch’s doctrine of the soul as essentially irrational, see the excellent discussion of Deuse 1983, ch. 2.

irrational, but receptive of ordering from the Logos. Typhon is that element underlying the disorderly world-soul that is unregenerately disorderly — that something which must always be opposite to the good spoken of at *Thl.* 176A, which “haunts our mortal nature, and this region here.” It cannot affect the impassivity of the supreme god, nor even of his Logos in its transcendent aspect (the ‘soul’ of Osiris), but it can and does ‘tear apart’ his ‘body’ by causing fragmentation of the individual *logoi* when they mingle with matter. If Isis, the world-soul, did not exert an ordering influence, there would be chaotic disorder — rather like, presumably, the incipient stages of Empedoclean Strife, with disconnected body-parts wandering about on their own, and so on. As it is, however, what we get is the physical universe of individuals, with the degree of imperfection attendant on that.

So this, I think, is what Plutarch’s much-discussed dualism boils down to in practice. Despite a number of ‘strongly dualist’ remarks about antithetical forces in the universe, particularly in connexion with his references to Persian religion, all Plutarch wants to assert, with his postulation of such figures as Seth-Typhon, Areimanius, and the Dionysus-Hades figure of the *De E*,³² is the existence in the universe of something rather more actively disruptive than purely passive matter, and this entity is what he sees as presented by Plato in such guises as the precosmic disorderly soul of the *Timaeus*, the σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία of the world in the *Statesman* myth (*Plt.* 272E), the ἀπειρία of the *Philebus* (16D, 23C), the κακοποιὸς ψυχή of *Laws* X (896D-898C), and — last but not least — the Indefinite Dyad of the ‘unwritten doctrines’.³³ This interpretation of Plato may not accord with the prevailing modern opinion, but it cannot be condemned, I think, within an ancient context, as seriously unplatonic.

³² I am conscious that the sublunary demiurge of the *De E* must appear, on the face of it, a far less threatening figure than Typhon or Areimanius, but I would contend that, after all, they fulfil very much the same function, which is to cause fragmentation and a veil of illusion in the physical world, and to provide a (necessary) counterweight to perfect order.

³³ There is an important passage contrasting God as One with the Indefinite Dyad at *Def. Or.* 428, where the Dyad is portrayed as ‘the element of all formlessness and disorder’ (ἀμορφίας πάσης στοιχείον οὐσα καὶ ἀταξίας), which sounds pretty dualistic, but once again boils down to something acceptably Platonic. Plutarch goes on to say that “the nature of the One limits and arrests what is void and irrational and indeterminate in Indefiniteness (ἀπειρία), gives it shape, and renders it in some way tolerant and receptive of definition...”; the Dyad is after all just the necessary productive element in the universe.

Plutarch's 'dualism', then, I would suggest — and here I am forced to correct my own previously expressed views³⁴ — is of a distinctly qualified type, and does not affect the overall supremacy of his primal deity. This deity, as we have seen, is true being (ὄν), one, good, and impassive; he is not seriously troubled by opposing forces. He is faced by an indefinite dyadic principle, manifested at a lower level as an irrational world-soul, which he moulds to his purposes³⁵ (cf. n. 27 above), by means of his Logos, which takes on something of the role of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* (though Plutarch also identifies some aspects of the Demiurge with God himself). And even after the Dyad has been very largely brought to order by the action of Logos, there remains a refractory residue, which ensures that all, at the level of physical, sublunary existence at least, will never be quite as it should be. If that is dualism, then Plutarch is liable to the charge, but this does not, I think, exclude him from the (fairly generous) ambit of the Platonism of this period.

A last word, though, on an issue where he does find himself at odds with at least the prevailing tendency within Platonism, as he freely recognises himself (*Proc. An.* 1012DE). This is the question of the temporal creation of the world by God, and the consequent postulation of a state of pre-cosmic chaos. Plutarch maintains this stoutly, in the *De procreatione animae*, despite the trenchant objections of Aristotle and the sophisticated reinterpretations of the Old Academicians, Speusippus, Xenocrates and Crantor. He does this, partly on the basis of what he sees as the manifest meaning of the text before him, but more importantly, because it seems to him to bear significantly on the question of theodicy. As he sets out the problem in 1015A-E, if the world is eternal, and God is responsible for it, then God is responsible for the creation of evil as well as good. The cause of evil cannot be Matter, since that is quite featureless and inert (Plutarch, we may note, has no hesitation in attributing the Aristotelian concept of Matter to Plato); the cause of evil must be an evil soul:

For what is without quality and of itself inert and without propensity Plato cannot suppose to be cause and principle of evil and call ugly

³⁴ E.g. in Dillon 1977, 202-6.

³⁵ Cf. previous note. On the role of this principle, and its relation to other similar ones in other versions of Platonism, see Dillon 1986, 107-23. There is a notable similarity, in particular, to the role of Sophia in the philosophical system of Philo of Alexandria.

and maleficent infinitude (ἀπειρίαν αἰσχρὰν καὶ κακοποιόν)³⁶ and again necessity (ἀνάγκη)³⁷ which is largely refractory and recalcitrant to God. In fact, the necessity and ‘congenital desire’ whereby the heaven is reversed, as is said in the *Politicus* (272E), and called back in the opposite direction, and “its ancient nature’s inbred character which had a large share of disorder before reaching the state of the present universe” (273B),³⁸ whence did these come to be in things if the substrate was unqualified matter and so void of all causality, and the creator good and desirous of making all things resemble himself as far as possible (cf. *Tim.* 29E-30A), and third besides these there was nothing?

(trans. Cherniss *LCL*, slightly altered).

He goes on to commend Plato for avoiding the difficulties in which the Stoics find themselves through having to introduce evil into the universe without a cause,³⁹ since neither God, their active cause, who is good, nor totally qualityless and inert Matter, could be supposed to generate it. Plato, he tells us (1015BC), saw the need for a third principle, ‘between Matter and God’ (μεταξὺ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ), as he puts it, to be the cause of evil, and free God from the imputation of being responsible for it.

This, then, is the ethical motivation for the doctrine of the temporal creation of the world: God must not be seen to be the cause of evil. Here Plutarch is only following Plato’s own precept enunciated in *Rep.* II 379C:

God, since he is good, is not the cause of all things, but for mankind he is the cause of few things, and of many things he is not the cause. For good things are far fewer with us than evil, and for the good we must assume no other cause than God, but the cause of evil we must look for in other things and not in God.

³⁶ This is nowhere stated as such by Plato, but, as Cherniss points out *ad loc.*, is a conflation of Plutarch’s interpretations of the ἀπειρία of the *Philebus* and the κακοποιὸς ψυχῇ of *Laws* X.

³⁷ Plutarch sees the ἀνάγκη of *Timaeus* 47E-48A etc. as referring to this same disorderly principle — and he equates this, just below, with the εἰμαρμένη of *Plt.* 272E.

³⁸ It is interesting to observe here, as Cherniss remarks *ad loc.*, that Plutarch craftily omits the phrase just preceding this, τὸ σωματοειδὲς τῆς συγκράσεως, as not suiting his theory. This is by no means the only place in this treatise where Plutarch is selective in his quotations.

³⁹ He lavishes a good deal of sarcasm on the Stoics in this connexion also at *Comm. Not.* 1065A-1068E, concentrating specifically on Chrysippus’ assertion that the presence of evil is actually needed for the completion of the universe — ignoring the awkward fact that in *Laws* X, especially 903B-D, Plato himself presents a remarkably proto-Stoic argument along the same lines. I am indebted to Julia Annas for making this point to me.

Plato, of course, does not specify in the *Republic* what these 'other things' (ἄλλ' ἄττα) might be, but Plutarch feels that he makes his views abundantly clear elsewhere, and specifically in the passages referred to above.

Despite the postulation of an independent, even if subordinate, cause of evil, Plutarch is still left with the problem of explaining the apparent vagaries of God's punishment of evildoers, and he makes a valiant effort at this in the dialogue *De sera numinis vindicta*, but the examination of the twists and turns of his argument there would be matter for another discourse. The purpose of the present investigation has been to show that, behind all the apparent inconsistencies and loose ends in Plutarch's thought there is discernible a fairly consistent theology, which one might characterize as an Alexandrian type of Platonism. I say that both because of the Egyptian provenance of Plutarch's mentor Ammonius, and because of the notable similarities between Plutarch's system and that of Philo (the Plutarchan Osiris and Isis answering in many respects to Philo's Logos and Sophia). Another interesting manifestation of what I would see as this Alexandrian system — misinterpreted, I think, by the Flemish scholar Torhout, in his monograph *Een Onbekend Gnostisch Systeem in Plutarchus De Iside et Osiride*⁴⁰ — is the creative, if rather neurotic use made of it in the second century by the Gnostic Valentinus, who began his career in Alexandria, in postulating the fall of Sophia and the creation of an ignorant and malignant Demiurge. There is no need to suppose a Gnostic background to Plutarch's system; rather one may see an Alexandrian Platonist background to that of Valentinus.

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⁴⁰ Louvain 1942.

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SESTO EMPIRICO E L'ASTROLOGIA

E. SPINELLI

I. Ancora prima che entrassero in campo i Padri della Chiesa, con il loro rivisitato bagaglio di dottrine neoplatoniche e le loro preoccupazioni di normalizzazione teologica, il mondo pagano greco-romano aveva già conosciuto una serie più o meno articolata di polemiche anti-astrologiche. Esse erano state elaborate in ambienti diversi e sotto l'influsso di varie posizioni filosofiche, distese lungo un arco temporale di parecchi secoli. Se tuttavia andiamo a verificare quanto di questo attacco è giunto sino a noi, non possiamo non restare delusi. Abbiamo infatti solo alcuni resoconti frammentari, frutto ad esempio di sintetiche esposizioni "di seconda mano", come nel caso della *oratio* di Favorino (*ap.* Gell. XIV 1, 1-36 = F 3 Barigazzi), o inseriti in trattazioni e contesti di più ampio respiro, rivolti all'analisi globale delle attitudini divinatorie in generale (come il *De divinatione* ciceroniano) o finalizzati alla demolizione etica delle dottrine fatalistiche *tout court*. Si pensi in questo caso ai vari trattati *de fato*, da quello di Cicerone¹ a quello dello pseudo-Plutarco.² Né aiuta, infine,

¹ Esso tocca specificamente temi astrologici nella sezione 11-16, oltre che, forse, in una delle parti perdute dell'opera, ad es. nella cosiddetta 'Lacuna B', cui sembrerebbe rinviare, *contra* Crisippo, il cenno alla *astrorum adfectio* che si legge in *Fat.* 8? Cf. Sharples 1991, 165; dubbi sull'intera questione torna ora a formulare Bobzien 1998, 146 e 293 n. 214.

² Cf. ad es. [Plu.] *Fat.* 569B-C. Un discorso a sé meriterebbe il silenzio di Alessandro di Afrodisia sui temi astrologici, di cui abbastanza sorprendentemente non abbiamo traccia nel *De fato*, forse per ragioni di "opportunità politica" filo-imperiale. Un accenno solo implicito sembra possibile cogliere in un passo (*Mant.* 180, 14 ss., sp. 180, 22), su cui mi limito a rinviare a P. Donini, 'Aristotelismo e indeterminismo in Alessandro di Afrodisia', in J. Wiesner (ed.), *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung, Paul Moraux gewidmet*, Bd. II, Berlin/New York 1987, sp. 87-9 (e relative note). Per ulteriori rinvii testuali cf. Amand 1945, sp. 73-7, cui può essere aggiunto un passo del commento di Galeno al *De aëris* di Ippocrate conservato completo solo in una versione araba, su cui cf. G. Strohmaier, 'Hellenistische Wissenschaft im neugefundenen Galenkommentar zur hippokratischen Schrift 'Über die Umwelt'', in J. Kollesch- D. Nickel (eds.), *Galen und das hellenistische Erbe*, Stuttgart 1993 ("Sudhoffs Archiv", H. 32), 162. Per un'utile rassegna critica degli scritti su e contro il determinismo fatalistico nel mondo antico cf. anche W. Theiler, 'Tacitus und die antike Schicksalslehre', in Id., *Forschungen zum Neoplatonismus*, Berlin 1966, 46-103; E. Valgiglio, 'Il fato nel pensiero classico antico', *Rivista di studi classici* 15 (1967), 305-30; 18 (1968), 56-84; A. Magris, *L'idea di destino nel pensiero antico*, 2

l'occorrenza di nudi titoli: pensiamo alle opere perdute di Plutarco *Εἰ ἡ τῶν μελλόντων πρόγνωσις ὠφέλιμος*, *Περὶ εἰμαρμένης* (in due libri), *Περὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν πρὸς τοὺς Στωικούς*, *Περὶ τοῦ ἐφ' ἡμῖν πρὸς Ἐπίκουρον*.

A una considerazione attenta, dunque, risulta che l'unica trattazione organica di cui disponiamo è un breve trattato di Sesto Empirico, il *Contro gli astrologi* (= *M. V*), che può essere senz'altro considerato come un testimone privilegiato. Anche volendosi limitare a un'osservazione di carattere meramente cronologico, senza entrare insomma nel merito degli argomenti che vengono presentati (e su cui mi soffermerò più avanti), è del resto innegabile che questo scritto si colloca in una posizione particolarmente felice. Che si opti per una datazione alta o bassa del suo autore, infatti, resta fermo un fatto: il *Contro gli astrologi* appare come l'anello conclusivo di una lunga tradizione. In primo luogo esso si caratterizza per la sua capacità di attingere a fonti diverse e ad alcuni dei filoni più interessanti dell'assalto (filosofico e non) alle superstiziose credenze dei Caldei. L'insieme di questo eterogeneo materiale viene tuttavia scelto e assemblato non in ossequio a un astratto ideale di "neutralità" o "oggettività", quanto piuttosto secondo un piano compositivo, posto costantemente "au service de la méthode sceptique de l'équilibrage", come scrive la Desbordes (1990, 168), e arricchito inoltre da un'originale presa di posizione pirroniana contro i fondamenti della prassi astrologica. Qualunque sia il giudizio sul grado di originalità riscontrabile in quest'attività di selezione e dominio delle fonti, inoltre, occorre preliminarmente sgombrare il campo da un possibile equivoco. Non esiste alcun elemento in grado di suffragare l'ipotesi — avanzata ad esempio in Gundel-Gundel 1966, 296 (nonché: 85; 104) — che la trattazione astrologica di Sesto dipenda *interamente* da Enesidemo.

Quello che mi propongo di fare è analizzare in dettaglio la struttura e le articolazioni interne di quest'opera, nella speranza di ricostruire — in modo attendibile, anche se in più punti necessariamente ipotetico — sia la mappa delle fonti che Sesto Empirico utilizza (parte II), sia la batteria delle più autentiche obiezioni pirroniane (parte III). Quanto al più generale obiettivo filosofico che egli persegue, esso è ben lontano, occorre precisare fin dall'inizio, da qualsiasi preoccupazione o esigenza di ordine 'teologico' (cf. tuttavia

infra p. 245). Nonostante questa palese distanza, mi sembra di poter dire sin d'ora che il possibile interesse del mio progetto di analisi risiede proprio nello sforzo di mostrare il carattere peculiare, direi unico dell'approccio pirroniano alle questioni sollevate dal ricorso alle dottrine astrologiche. Come vedremo, infatti, al di là di alcune critiche improntate alla polemica di lontana origine carneadea contro le previsioni dei Caldei, nulla autorizza ad accostare *M. V* alle varie trattazioni o ai veri e propri trattati *de fato* di provenienza scettico-accademica, platonica (o medio-platonica) e peripatetica. Da questi l'opera sestana è lontana non perché inferiore, confusa o filosoficamente irrilevante, ma solo perché sceglie deliberatamente una diversa prospettiva di lettura del fenomeno astrologico. Essa, verosimilmente in conformità con la prassi degli astrologi qui presi di mira, rende innanzi tutto marginale la presenza e il ruolo del concetto di εἰμαρμένη (cf. anche *infra* p. 253) e dunque mette in secondo piano non solo 'i molti problemi, fisici, etici e dialettici' — per usare un'espressione del *De fato* pseudo-plutarco (568F) — ma anche i difficili dilemmi teologici insistentemente posti dal rapporto tra fato e provvidenza divina, soprattutto a partire dal II sec. d.C.³ Le ragioni che stanno dietro questa scelta ermeneutica sestana saranno richiamate più in dettaglio nella sezione conclusiva del lavoro (parte IV). Essa offrirà lo spunto e insieme il sottofondo epistemologico per una critica "laica" nei confronti della fiducia nel potere degli astri e dei suoi interpreti, fiducia spesso intrecciata a partire dall'età ellenistica con credenze o vere e proprie superstizioni attinenti la sfera della religiosità, popolare come anche di *élite*.

II. Fin dai primi paragrafi l'analisi sestana si lascia apprezzare per un'esigenza di precisione e direi quasi di rigore tassonomico. In *M. V* 1-2 troviamo infatti una chiara, forse la prima a nostra disposizione, "Differenzierung der Himmelskunde", che è insieme terminologica e fattuale.⁴ Rispetto al concetto generale di astrologia vengono qui

³ Cf. Bobzien 1998, 5, la quale ricorda in proposito, oltre alla trattazione dello pseudo-plutarco *De fato*, passi del commento di Calcidio al *Timeo*, del *De natura hominis* di Nemesio e nudi titoli di opere di Ierocle di Alessandria, Giovanni Crisostomo e Proclo. Sulla peculiare posizione di Alcinoos cf. ora J. Mansfeld, 'Alcinous on Fate and Providence', in J.J. Cleary (ed.), *Traditions of Platonism. Essays in Honour of John Dillon*, Aldershot 1999, 139-150; più in generale, per utili indicazioni e rinvii cf. anche H. Dörrie†-M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus in der Antike: Bd. 4: Der Platonismus im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert nach Christus*, Stuttgart/Bad Cannstatt 1993, sp. 321 ss.

⁴ Cf. Hübner 1989, 28; si veda anche A. Stückelberger, *Einführung in die antiken*

individuati tre ambiti distinti. Essi vanno esaminati in dettaglio, non solo per chiarire in via preliminare l'oggetto specifico della polemica di Sesto, ma anche per individuare quelle accezioni — e le relative tradizioni — che egli ritiene opportuno *non* esaminare.

A. Il primo significato di astrologia è quello che la identifica con un'attività di indagine completa, basata sui canoni dell'aritmetica e della geometria. Sesto si sente legittimato a non analizzarla, avendone egli già distrutto le fondamenta nei trattati immediatamente precedenti (*M.* III e IV). Credo che questa visione matematizzante possa essere accostata alla descrizione che Posidonio dà della ἀστρολογία, nell'intento di differenziarla e subordinarla rispetto alla φυσική θεωρία, cui dunque essa non può in alcun modo essere assimilata (cf. F 18 E.-K. = 255 Th.; si veda anche D.L. VII 132-3).

Avremmo allora — *via negationis* — una prima indicazione importante. Dall'attacco sestano resta probabilmente fuori la trattazione più sistematica e convinta che la storia dello stoicismo avesse fino ad allora prodotto in merito all'indagine sugli astri, nella sua duplice valenza astronomica e astrologica. Se non è dunque questa la direzione in cui vanno cercati i punti di riferimento di Sesto, risulta più agevole comprendere perché il concetto di συμπάθεια, così determinante nella filosofia di Posidonio, giochi invece in *M.* V un ruolo sostanzialmente marginale. Esso viene fugacemente chiamato in causa solo quale presupposto generalissimo, direi quasi scontato, delle tesi dei Caldei.⁵ Anzi, anche quando registra un'obiezione (non pirroniana) che nega qualsiasi συμπάσχειν fra cose terrestri e cose celesti, Sesto la qualifica come un rozzo tentativo di dimostrazione (cf. *M.* V 43-4 e *infra* pp. 250-1).

B. Anche la seconda accezione, che insiste su una determinata 'capacità predittiva' da alcuni definita anche 'astronomia' (*M.* V 1-2), viene preliminarmente ed esplicitamente esclusa dalla successiva trattazione, ma per motivi direi opposti. Essa sembra meritare non le critiche, ma un certo apprezzamento da parte di Sesto, anche se ciò non implica *ipso facto* che essa sia "immune to sceptical doubt", come

Naturwissenschaften, Darmstadt 1988, 41. Per analogia con altre partizioni riscontrabili in *M.* I-VI Blank 1998, 325 ritiene che essa sia "characteristically Epicurean".

⁵ Cf. *M.* V 4 (ma anche V 21). Questa posizione marginale è ancor più degna di nota, qualora si rifletta sul fatto che Sesto cita e critica altrove a lungo la dottrina — verosimilmente posidoniana — della συμπάθεια universale: cf. al riguardo *M.* IX 78 ss. (F 354 Th. = *SVF* II 1013; cf. anche Bury 1949, 324 n. a), che può essere utilmente messo a confronto con Cic. *Div.* II 33-4 (= Posid. F 106 E.-K. = 379 Theiler = *SVF* II 1211).

giustamente sottolinea Barnes (1988, 62). La sua positività sembra in ogni caso consistere nel suo essere in grado di fornire previsioni attendibili/utili di eventi naturali (meteorologici) particolarmente gravi e pericolosi. Se la terminologia con cui viene descritto il procedimento a base rigorosamente empirica e osservativa su cui si fonderebbe tale δύνάμις sembra quasi anticipare le considerazioni — personali e genuinamente pirroniane — avanzate nella parte conclusiva dell'opera, altri elementi spingono in una direzione diversa. Eudosso e Ipparco (e altri simili "scienziati", potremmo glossare), tradizionalmente annoverati nella schiera degli indagatori "seri" della volta celeste, vengono infatti chiamati in causa quali campioni di questo accettabile atteggiamento predittivo.⁶ A esso — come già ricordato — 'alcuni' hanno voluto dare il nome di astronomia, anche se forse noi preferiremmo parlare più esattamente di "astro-meteorologia", la cui funzione si consolidò attraverso la diffusione dei cosiddetti παρατήρηματα o calendari astronomici⁷.

Il caso di Eudosso sembrerebbe essere particolarmente significativo, al di là dell'attendibilità storica del rinvio sestano.⁸ Non

⁶ Per un primo orientamento su Ipparco mi limito a rinviare a F. Franco Repellini, 'Ipparco e la tradizione astronomica', in G. Giannantoni-M. Vegetti (eds.), *La scienza ellenistica*, Napoli 1984, 187-223; cf. anche F. Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues*, Bruxelles 1937, 125; O. Neugebauer, 'Notes on Hipparchus', in *The Aegean and the Near East. Studies Presented to Hetty Goldman*, New York 1956, 292-6; Gundel-Gundel 1966, 109-10.

⁷ Su cui cf. soprattutto A. Rehm, *Paraepgmastudien*, Munich 1941 e B.L. van der Waerden, *Die Astronomie der Griechen. Eine Einführung*, Darmstadt 1988, 76-92. Per il ruolo "archegetico" svolto da Eudosso in proposito cf. anche Gundel-Gundel 1966, sp. 84-5. Utili osservazioni sulla questione si possono inoltre leggere in O. Neugebauer, 'The History of Ancient Astronomy: Problems and Methods', *Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific* 58.340 (1946), sp. 113-4. Per il carattere inevitabilmente fallace dei pronostici elaborati nella letteratura paraepgmatica fondata sulla mera παρατήρησις cf. invece Gem. XVII, 23 Aujac.

⁸ Cf. in proposito Barnes 1988, 71. Sulla posizione di Eudosso (*M. V* 1-2 = *F* 141 Lasserre), cf. in ogni caso G.E.R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience. Studies in the Origins and Development of Greek Science*, Cambridge 1979, 180 n. 292 e F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and the Romans*, New York 1960², 31, i quali difendono la tesi di una circolazione dell'astrologia babilonese (anche 'genetiaca') sin dal IV sec. a.C.; si vedano anche Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 33-4 e van der Waerden 1953, 224-5. *Contra* cf. Barton 1994, sp. 23 e 34 e ora Cambiano 1999, 597-8; molto cauto sull'effettivo ruolo di Eudosso è A. Momigliano, *Saggezza straniera. L'ellenismo e le altre culture*, Torino 1980, 148. Sulla questione, sollevata anche ai fini del ruolo svolto dall'astrologia nello stoicismo antico, almeno a partire da Crisippo, cf. le convenienti argomentazioni di Ippolito 1984, oltre ad alcuni interessanti rinvii a testi babilonesi in F. Rochberg-Halton, 'New Evidence for the History of Astrology', *JNES* 43 (1984), 115-40 e Ead., 'Elements of the Babylonian Contribution to Hellenistic Astrology', *JAOS* 108 (1988), 51-62; utili osservazioni si leggono anche in M.P. Nilsson, 'Die babylonische Grundlage der griechischen Astrologie', *Eranos* 56

dimentichiamo infatti che egli viene posto addirittura fra i nemici dichiarati dei *Chaldeorum monstra* dalla tradizione scettico-accademica da cui dipende Cicerone nel libro secondo del *De divinatione*,⁹ in cui ricompare anche l'accostamento fra astronomia e alcune delle arti "utili" qui ricordate da Sesto.

Nonostante queste corrispondenze, però, non credo si possa senz'altro concludere che quegli 'alcuni', cui verosimilmente risale la seconda accezione ("astronomica") di astrologia, siano pensatori legati all'accademia scettica, né tanto meno non meglio specificati "Platonici", come vorrebbe Hübner (1989, 29). Più verosimile mi pare invece l'ipotesi di una dipendenza di Sesto dalla ricca letteratura paraepgmatica precedentemente ricordata. Appare in ogni caso innegabile che le argomentazioni addotte dai τινές in questione a sostegno di un'indagine legittima sugli astri (di una astro-meteorologia *stricto sensu*) non verranno in seguito utilizzate da Sesto.

C. Quale terza accezione di astrologia Sesto propone infine quella contro cui svilupperà le sue critiche nei paragrafi successivi, restringendone l'ambito alla sola 'dottrina delle natività' (o γενεθλιαλογία), la cui definizione più attendibile si legge forse in Tolomeo (*Tetr.* III 1 1): si tratta della previsione 'degli avvenimenti particolari che riguardano l'uomo nella sua natura individuale' (tr. Feraboli 1985, 179). Essa è esclusa, al pari della θυτική (τέχνη), dal novero delle vere arti (cf. *M.* I 182 e Blank 1998, 216) ed è solo una delle molteplici specie in cui è possibile dividere il genere 'divinazione', più esattamente una sottospecie della cosiddetta divinazione artificiale.

Anche in questo caso alcune occorrenze linguistiche rendono immediatamente chiari i motivi che stanno dietro il rifiuto pirroniano, ancora prima della presentazione di singole obiezioni. I sostenitori di questa presunta τέχνη, raggruppati sotto l'etichetta di Caldei — d'uso corrente, soprattutto a quanto pare nell'ambito della lingua dotta latina: cf. ad es. *Cic. Div.* I 2; *Gell.* I 9.6 e per altri rinvii Hübner 1989, 17 e n. 38 —, sono infatti responsabili per Sesto di una

(1958), 1-11. *Contra* cf. soprattutto Long 1982; M. Isnardi Parente, 'Fra Stoa e media Stoa', *SIFC* 85 (1992), 609; Giannantonio 1994; Pompeo Faracovi 1996, 58 e ora Bobzien 1998, 146.

⁹ Cf. sp. *Cic. Div.* II 87 (= F 343 Lasserre). E' stato da più parti supposto che la fonte immediata del passo sia Panezio, il quale tuttavia "probably derived his argument from Carneades (in his polemic against Chrysippus...)", come suggerisce Pease (1963, 496), analogamente forse a quanto accadeva per obiezioni contro altri aspetti della divinazione: cf. ad es. *Cic. Div.* I 12 = T 138 Alesse. Dubbi su tale filiazione esprime tuttavia F. Alesse (ed.), *Panezio di Rodi. Testimonianze*, Napoli 1997, 271.

serie di “colpe”, che potremmo così riassumere, seguendo un ordine crescente.

1. In primo luogo essi sono rei, con terminologia giuridica, di “millantato credito”, poiché spacciano se stessi per ‘matematici’ e ‘astrologi’ (che essi si prendessero molto sul serio risulta anche da altri passi sestani: cf. ad es. *M.* V 20 e 22); al contrario — sembra sottintendere già Sesto — non possono contare su conoscenze fondate né in un campo né nell’altro.¹⁰

2. L’arte di cui si vantano risulta essere vana chiacchiera, pura esibizione di nomi altisonanti, assimilabile dunque a quella ‘altezzosa vanagloria’ con cui i dogmatici decantano le loro dottrine più importanti.¹¹

3. La loro attività rappresenta in verità una minaccia su più piani nei confronti delle norme di condotta della vita ordinaria o βίος. Ciò a cui allude Sesto con βίος è chiaramente quella forma di vita o comportamento, che egli più volte qualifica come κοινός e la cui articolazione più nitida si legge nella presentazione della βιωτική τήρησις, accolta ὁδοξάστως dal filosofo pirroniano (cf. soprattutto *P.* I 23-4). Poiché inoltre una delle radici di tale βιωτική τήρησις consiste nell’accettazione delle leggi e dei costumi in vigore presso la comunità in cui ci si trova a vivere, si potrebbe scorgere dietro la polemica anti-astrologica sestana — in modo per la verità del tutto implicito — anche la volontà di aderire a una forma di teologia estremamente semplificata, ridotta ai pochi punti essenziali ricordati in *P.* III 2, e accettati infatti dai Pirroniani τῷ μὲν βίῳ κατακολουθοῦντες.

4. Più specificamente le loro pratiche danno luogo unicamente a forme di superstizione.¹²

¹⁰ Anche autori lontani da tendenze scettiche protestano contro l’ignoranza degli astrologi: cf. ad es. Tacito (*Hist.* I 22; cf. anche *Ann.* VI 22); vedi anche l’episodio di Dionisio il Sofista citato da Filostrato (*V. Soph.* I 22, 2). Sulla malevola capacità da parte degli astrologi di ‘illudere’ o addirittura ‘frodare’ gli inesperti insiste Agostino: cf. soprattutto *Civ. Dei* V 2, un passo in cui quale tipico esempio negativo viene citato Posidonio; cf. anche Favorino *ap.* Gell. XIV 1, 33; Plin. *Nat. Hist.* XXX 14.

¹¹ Cf. al riguardo l’espressione che introduce la dottrina dogmatica del criterio in *M.* VII 27. Alla critica di Sesto, qui e — come vedremo — più avanti, possono essere accostate alcune “dure” espressioni agostiniane: cf. *Civ. Dei* V 4 (*mathematicorum vaniloquia*), 5 (*vanitatis commenta*) e 6 (dove la dottrina astrale viene presentata come un qualcosa di massimamente *insipiens*).

¹² Δεισιδαιμονία e il verbo da cui dipende (ἐπιτευχίζω) sono *hapax* in Sesto. Si noti inoltre come l’accusa di *superstitio* venga elevata da Cicerone — che darebbe in tal caso spazio a una sorta di “voce epicurea” secondo M. Schofield, ‘Cicero for and

5. L'accettazione della *γενεθλιαλογία* produce infine come risultato estremo l'impossibilità di vivere in accordo con l'unico criterio che per uno scettico genuino fonda gli atti di scelta e di rifiuto: lo *ὁρθὸς λόγος*.

Quest'ultimo, lungi dall'essere interpretabile come uno strumento dogmatico di orientamento nella condotta, va inteso alla luce delle precisazioni fornite da Sesto in *P. I* 17, riguardo all'unico senso in cui è possibile parlare di una *αἵρεσις* scettica:

Qualora invece si affermi che una setta è un indirizzo che, in base al fenomeno, si lascia guidare da un certo discorso, per l'esattezza quello che mostra come sia possibile vivere rettamente (e si intenda per rettamente non solo secondo virtù, ma nel senso più piano del termine) e che si estende fino alla capacità di sospendere il giudizio, diciamo che egli appartiene a una setta. Ci lasciamo infatti guidare da un discorso che, in base al fenomeno, ci insegna a vivere in ossequio ai costumi patrii, alle leggi, ai modi di vita e alle nostre specifiche affezioni.

Questa introduttiva dichiarazione di intenti sembra individuare nel terreno della condotta pratica il campo di riferimento messo in pericolo dalla prassi degli oroscopi. E' dunque verosimile congetturare che, al pari di ogni altra forma di dogmatismo, anche quello astrologico, con la sua eccessiva sottigliezza, chiamata esplicitamente in causa in *M. V* 5, non faccia altro che generare agli occhi di Sesto ansietà e turbamento. Inutile attendersi tuttavia che esso venga attaccato con argomentazioni morali "positive", come poteva essere ad esempio presso altri indirizzi filosofici (platonico-accademici, peripatetici, epicurei o cinici che fossero), impegnati a difendere la libertà umana contro ogni forma di necessitante determinismo astrale. In Sesto non ne troviamo traccia, coerentemente, credo, con l'impossibilità da parte del vero scettico di pronunciarsi in modo fermamente dogmatico su alcunché. La strada obbligata che egli deve dunque seguire, anche in questo campo specifico della sua polemica, è quella tracciata in *P. I* 12 (cf. anche *P. I* 26) e ribadita nella sezione metodologica generale premessa a *M. I-VI* (cf. sp. *M. I* 5-7). Di fronte a qualsiasi oggetto di indagine lo scettico solleva questioni non allo scopo di determinarne la maggiore o minore utilità ai

against Divination', *JRS* 76 (1986), sp. 59, con l'ulteriore rinvio a *N. D.* I 55-6 e 117 — contro l'intera dottrina (stoica) della divinazione: *Div.* II 100 e soprattutto 148-9. Le predizioni natalizie dei Caldei, invece, vengono molto più seccamente bollate — in una sezione di probabile origine accademico-scettica — come frutto di *deliratio*, ancor peggiore della *stultitia*: *Div.* II 90; il loro carattere "ridicolo" e "irrazionale" non sfugge del resto neppure alla critica di Plotino: cf. *Enn.* II 3, 3, 8 e 19; 4, 1.

fini del conseguimento di un sapere perfetto, né perché mosso da ignoranza o peggio ancora da gelosia e malevolenza, ma solo nella speranza di raggiungere la verità. Quello che egli ottiene perseguendo con tenacia tale atteggiamento metodologico è però la scoperta di una non dirimibile discordanza di argomenti opposti, che inevitabilmente spingono verso la ἐποχή e contemporaneamente assicurano la vera ἀπαράξια (cf. al riguardo soprattutto *P. I* 26-9). Ritengo che il modo più proficuo di interpretare la posizione assunta da Sesto sia dunque quello di applicare questo generalissimo principio della ricerca scettica *anche* a *M. V*, pena il fraintendimento dei suoi reali intenti o la superficiale presentazione della sua struttura come un esercizio di passiva copiatura e arrangiamento di tradizioni preesistenti. Se infatti è innegabile, come vedremo in dettaglio più avanti, che Sesto utilizza materiale della più svariata provenienza, altrettanto certo è che egli lo piega ai propri criteri e scopi filosofici. Si può al riguardo ricorrere a un'immagine di viva immediatezza — su cui cf. Mansfeld 1992, sp. 153-7. Il lavoro di cucitura operato da Sesto è paragonabile alla produzione di una bandiera in stile *patchwork*, la diversità dei cui elementi è sotto gli occhi di tutti e la cui origine può con ragionevole verosimiglianza essere rintracciata nelle tradizioni precedenti. Quello che è veramente interessante, però, è scoprire con esattezza su quale fortino filosofico viene issata tale bandiera, quale “scelta”, soprattutto come vedremo di metodo, essa serve a segnalare e rafforzare.

Se andiamo ad analizzare la struttura di *M. V* alla luce di queste necessarie premesse, scopriamo che Sesto uniforma la sua indagine anti-astrologica a uno schema consueto, più volte seguito nel corso delle sue ἀντιρρήσεις. Le tappe della trattazione possono essere così schematicamente riassunte:

– in primo luogo (§§ 5-42) egli lascia spazio all'esposizione degli elementi più importanti che sorreggono il metodo di indagine dei Caldei, accontentandosi tuttavia di un *résumé* selettivo e schematico; tale atteggiamento di scelta — sui cui presupposti teorici cf. *M. I* 5-7 e ora Blank 1998, 80-4 — mette capo sempre, *anche* nell'analisi anti-astrologica (cf. *M. V* 106), a obiezioni avanzate πραγματικῶς, ovvero ‘per mezzo di argomentazioni ancorate a dati di fatto’, le uniche davvero valide agli occhi di Sesto (oltre a *M. I* 7, cf. anche *M. VI* 38 e 68; *P. III* 13);¹³

¹³ E' comunque innegabile che il resoconto sestano è molto più dettagliato di quello offerto da Cicerone, sulla cui confusa e imprecisa esposizione in *Div. II* 87 ss.

– quindi (§§ 43-8) elenca brevemente alcune obiezioni costantemente e tradizionalmente sollevate contro l'astrologia, citate per amor di completezza, ma non ulteriormente sfruttate nel resto dell'opera;

– in terzo luogo, dando piena applicazione alla tipica strategia di attacco pirroniana, registra una lunga batteria di argomentazioni polemiche, per l'esattezza tre ondate successive (rispettivamente: §§ 50-85; 85-95; 95-102), di cui occorrerà esaminare la possibile provenienza;

– infine (§§ 103-5) presenta la propria conclusione generale.

Conviene in ogni caso procedere con ordine, analizzando le singole tappe in cui può essere divisa la trattazione sestana. Cominciamo dal rapido schizzo delle tesi astrologiche dei Caldei. Il primo posto è occupato al riguardo dalla presentazione della premessa teorica di fondo su cui si regge la loro arte: il *συμπᾶθελν* universale e la capacità di modificazione esercitata dagli influssi astrali sugli eventi terrestri (§ 4).

Un breve commento si impone a questo punto. Sembrerebbe infatti di essere di fronte a quella che è stata definita "hard astrology" da Long (1982, 185 e 170 n. 19), il quale sembra identificarla con la stoicheggiante e ingenuamente fatalistica presentazione offerta da Manilio.¹⁴ Interessante e significativa, nella medesima direzione, appare anche la presenza in *M. V* 4 di alcuni versi omerici (*Od.* XVIII 136-7, utilizzati da Sesto anche in un contesto diverso, di carattere etico: cf. *P.* III 244). Essa conferma una "coloritura" stoica del passo, visto che gli Stoici erano soliti "usurare" proprio quei versi di Omero per illustrare la loro teoria del fato, stando almeno a quanto attesta Agostino (*Civ. Dei* V 8), richiamandosi alla traduzione datane da Cicerone (*Fat.* F 3). Tale "coloritura" stoica dei principi dell'arte astrologica combattuta da Sesto è un *fatto* che non deve sorprenderci, direi quasi una normale "alleanza" a partire almeno dal I sec. a.C.; anzi forse anche in precedenza, sin dai primi autori stoici: da

cf. il giudizio di Pease 1963, 497-9. Sesto è del resto l'unica fonte polemica — a parte il sintetico resoconto in *Cic. Div.* II 89, su cui cf. anche *infra* n. 15 — che ci ha conservato non solo obiezioni, ma anche dottrine positivamente sostenute dagli astrologi: cf. anche Long 1982, 185 e *infra* i dati raccolti nell'*Appendice*.

¹⁴ Cf. ancora Long 1982, 186-7 e sul piano testuale, ad es., *Man.* IV 14-22 e 107-16. Per l'ipotesi di un bersaglio astrologico *unico* combattuto da Sesto (o dalla sua fonte) cf. anche F. Boll-C. Bezold-W. Gundel, *Sternglaube und Sterneutung. Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie*, Leipzig/Berlin 1931, 99; per la possibilità che egli abbia invece selezionato materiali diversi da più fonti cf. *infra* l'*Appendice*.

Crisippo almeno (cf. al riguardo Ioppolo 1984; utili indicazioni anche in Theiler 1982, 2, 311-2). Non vanno tuttavia dimenticati: 1) i “distinguo” di Diogene di Babilonia e Antipatro e l'aperto rifiuto di Panezio; 2) l'osservazione generale per cui “quando si parla di astrologia nello Stoicismo antico, si fa riferimento ad un significato debole, se con ciò si intende il fatto che gli Stoici consideravano gli astri soltanto come segni e non come cause del destino umano”, come scrive la Ioppolo (1984, 89; cf. anche *infra* nn. 55 e 60).

L'insieme di queste considerazioni non offre purtroppo elementi decisivi per stabilire l'effettiva paternità di coloro che sostenevano le teorie contro cui Sesto polemizza (sulla questione cf. tuttavia *infra* pp. 270-1). I suoi avversari, in ogni caso, non sembrano coltivare neppure ambizioni “teologiche” e possono essere forse accostati a *illi, qui sine Dei voluntate decernere opinantur sidera quid agamus vel quid bonorum habeamus malorumve patiamur*, ricordati in *Civ. Dei* V 1 e la cui posizione Agostino sembra voler differenziare da quella degli Stoici, per i quali il fato si identifica non con la *astrorum constitutio*, ma con *omnium causarum connexio et series* (cf. ancora *Civ. Dei* V 8 = *SVF* II 932).

Il secondo punto su cui insiste Sesto è il vizio dogmatico che ai suoi occhi caratterizza l'attività degli astrologi, l'eccessiva sottigliezza dello sguardo che essi rivolgono alla volta celeste.

Egli enuncia quindi nella prima parte del § 5 i due punti di riferimento basilari degli oroscopi caldaici:

1. la funzione di cause efficienti riconosciuta ai sette ‘pianeti’ rispetto ai singoli eventi della vita; già questa notazione iniziale sembra suffragare l'ipotesi che Sesto descriva e critichi una fase avanzata, a lui contemporanea dell'astrologia, quella in cui “nous allons voir grandir de plus en plus le rôle des planètes et la vertu propre des signes passer au second plan dans les associations entre signes et planètes (...)”, come scrive Bouché-Leclercq (1899, 179);¹⁵
2. la funzione co-operante svolta al riguardo dalle differenti parti dello zodiaco.

Fedele alla sua promessa iniziale, Sesto presenta subito dopo una descrizione abbastanza lunga del cerchio zodiacale (§§ 5-26). Segue

¹⁵ Sempre Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 181 n. 1 rinvia, per una posizione più “datata”, al resoconto di *Cic. Div.* II 89: qui, sulla scia delle obiezioni più “filosofiche” che tecnicamente “astrologiche” di Panezio — cf. Pease 1963, 499 —, il primato sembra infatti ancora attribuito ai segni zodiacali. Non si può tuttavia escludere che questa presentazione risenta della personale incompetenza o di una oggettiva confusione di Cicerone stesso. Si noti infine che forse proprio per evitare automatismi causali così rigidi Tolomeo insiste sulla funzione “mediatrice” del *μετρίων*: cf. al riguardo Bezza 1992, sp. 19-21.

un resoconto molto più breve del metodo di osservazione dell'oroscopo al momento della nascita (§§ 27-8, criticato poi ai §§ 68 ss.); quindi la classificazione dei pianeti e delle loro 'qualità' (§§ 29-40), mentre la chiusa di questa sezione di *M. V* (§§ 41-2) è riservata alla rapida presentazione del modo in cui i Caldei formulano le loro 'predizioni degli effetti', più semplici o più circostanziate a seconda dei fattori che vengono chiamati in causa.¹⁶

Esaurito a questo punto il resoconto verosimile del 'carattere' dell'astrologia da lui presa di mira, Sesto inizia a raccogliere le obiezioni già formulate contro di essa in precedenza. In questa sua specifica operazione — ma *solo* in questa, e non in senso assoluto —, che risponde alla sopracitata esigenza di scoperta (o creazione) di λόγοι fra loro equipollenti, "he proposes not to construct new but to rehearse existing arguments; he poses not as a philosopher but as a compiler", come scrive Barnes (1988, 57). Non si può escludere che in questo suo sforzo di "compilatore" Sesto possa essersi servito dell'opera di un predecessore neo-pirroniano, impegnato a raccogliere materiale che evidenziasse una διαφωνία generalizzata sul tema della εἰσαρμμένη.¹⁷

Il resoconto sestano appare comunque abbastanza ordinato, anche se non possiamo valutarne in pieno la completezza ed esaustività. I suoi riferimenti infatti, tutti anonimi, si limitano a registrare nell'ordine le critiche di 'alcuni' (§§ 43-4), poi di 'altri' (§ 45) e infine di 'non pochi' (§§ 45-8). Né del resto può venirci in soccorso un'abbondante documentazione parallela, attraverso cui stabilire in modo certo la paternità delle tesi citate da Sesto. Occorrerà dunque muoversi con la massima cautela nel tentativo di rintracciare gli autori o quanto meno gli indirizzi di pensiero che si muovono sullo sfondo di questa batteria di obiezioni.

Cominciamo dalla prima, che, come già accennato in precedenza, non sembra godere del favore di Sesto. Si tratta del tentativo, rozzo ai suoi occhi, di negare *tout court* qualsiasi relazione di reciproco influsso fra cose celesti e terrestri, qualsiasi loro συμπάσχειν. L'argomentazione addotta a sostegno dagli ἔνιοι che propongono tale critica insiste nel sottolineare l'impossibilità di estendere l'unità e

¹⁶ Per alcuni aspetti rilevanti del resoconto astrologico conservato in questi paragrafi cf. l'*Appendice* inserita alla fine del presente contributo.

¹⁷ Tracce di questo antecedente neo-pirroniano sarebbero rinvenibili anche nei primi due capitoli del *De fato* di Alessandro di Afrodisia, stando almeno all'interpretazione proposta da J. Mansfeld, 'Diaphonia: the Argument of Alexander *De Fato* Chs. 1-2', *Phronesis* 33 (1988), 181-207.

reciproca corrispondenza riscontrabili nell'organismo umano fra la testa da una parte e le altre membra a essa subordinate dall'altra al modello cosmico, ove invece regna piuttosto la differenza, al punto che si debbono postulare modalità di unificazione diverse a livello celeste e terrestre. Bisogna confessare subito che ogni sforzo per cercare di capire chi siano gli ἔνιοι cui Sesto fa riferimento appare destinato a restare sul piano della ipoteticità.¹⁸ Limitiamoci dunque a raccogliere alcuni indizi esteriori. Innanzi tutto l'avverbio ἀγροικότερον, con cui viene "sottostimata" la loro argomentazione, compare solo in un altro punto del *corpus* sestano, *M.* VIII 337, dove è esplicitamente utilizzato per qualificare, o meglio squalificare sin dall'inizio, una replica attribuita a οἱ Ἐπικούρειοι.¹⁹ Si potrebbe dunque supporre — molto cautamente — che anche in questo caso esso svolga la medesima funzione. Appare tuttavia difficile negare che filosofi di fede epicurea avrebbero piuttosto insistito, nella loro critica, sulla *identità* di struttura atomica fra cielo e terra, non sulla loro διαφορά. Un grado di sicurezza maggiore sembra possibile raggiungere in merito al bersaglio della polemica contenuta nel § 44: la visione fortemente unificata del cosmo qui attaccata è tipica infatti della dottrina stoica, in particolare forse posidoniana, che Sesto conosce e critica anche in altri contesti.²⁰

¹⁸ Giannantoni 1994, 211 proponeva dubitativamente Panezio o Favorino; Russo 1972, 192 n. 21, seguito ora da Bergua Caverio 1997, 208 n. 315, pensava invece al solo Favorino, ma il suo rinvio a Gell. XIV 1, 1-13 — sulla scia dell'edizione teubneriana di *M.* V — appare non solo generico, ma anche privo di fondamento. Un'ipotesi diversa avanza Alesse 1994, 250 n. 78: "l'autore di tale confutazione potrebbe essere un Peripatetico o uno Stoico influenzato dall'aristotelismo, come Boeto di Sidone il quale, ispirandosi a Teofrasto, nega appunto che il cosmo sia paragonabile al corpo umano". Si noti tuttavia: 1. che l'obiezione registrata da Sesto nega solo che esista uno stesso tipo di unità a livello celeste e terrestre, non *tout court* che il modello organicistico sia estendibile anche al cosmo; 2. che non abbiamo per Boeto testimonianze che gli attribuiscono la negazione *anche* di qualsiasi forma di *συνπάθεια*. Cf. inoltre D.L. V 32, dove viene esplicitamente attribuita ad Aristotele — in un resoconto dossografico, forse redatto sotto influsso stoico? cf. perciò A. Dihle, 'Die Schicksalslehren der Philosophie in der alten Kirche', in J. Wiesner (ed.), *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung, Paul Moraux gewidmet*, Bd. II, Berlin/New York 1987, 60-1 n. 12 — la tesi secondo cui διατείνειν δὲ αὐτοῦ [*scil.* di ὁ θεός] τὴν πρόνοιαν μέχρι τῶν οὐρανίων καὶ εἶναι ἀκίνητον αὐτόν, mentre τὰ δ'ἐπίγεια κατὰ τὴν πρὸς ταῦτα συνπάθειαν οἰκονομεῖσθαι.

¹⁹ L'accusa di "rozzezza" sembra essere stata — anche in ambito stoico (Diogene di Babilonia) — uno dei cavalli di battaglia della polemica anti-epicurea: cf. ad es. l'occorrenza del verbo ἀγροικεύομαι e dei suoi *cognati* (ἀγροικία, ἀγροικός) nel libro quarto del *De musica* filodemeo (coll. 26, 15; 27, 15; 30, 3 ed. Neubecker).

²⁰ Cf. soprattutto *M.* IX 78 ss. = Posid. F 354 Th., con il relativo commento in Theiler 1982, 2.251-2, e *supra* n. 5; si veda anche Sen., *Nat. Quaest.* VI 14. Per altri

Se passiamo alla seconda obiezione, formulata da anonimi ἄλλοι, restiamo subito colpiti dallo spazio minimo che a essa viene riservato (solo la parte iniziale del § 45: 3 righe del testo greco), forse un indizio esterno già abbastanza rilevante dello scarso peso che essa gioca nell'economia globale dell'attacco sestano. Ciò appare tanto più degno di nota visto i motivi che la sorreggono e il modo in cui essa doveva essere articolata. Gli ἄλλοι di cui riferisce Sesto, infatti, muovono le loro critiche *anche* in merito al fato. La presenza del καί induce a supporre che le loro obiezioni avessero una portata più vasta. Poiché forse esse coincidevano sotto altri aspetti con quelle formulate in altri ambienti filosofici, Sesto preferisce selezionare quell'unica tesi veramente caratteristica del loro attacco polemico, ovvero la negazione del principio secondo cui πάντα γίνεται κατὰ εἰμαρμένην.²¹ Nonostante il carattere estremamente sintetico della testimonianza sestana, credo si possa avanzare, pur con grande cautela, la seguente ipotesi. Il passo potrebbe conservare tracce di una replica dialettica a una probabile tesi di partenza, che forse pretendeva di fondare la validità delle previsioni astrologiche su un λόγος strutturato in *modus tollendo tollens*:

– se non tutti gli eventi accadono secondo il fato, allora non esiste l'arte dei Caldei, fondata sulla fiducia assoluta nella εἰμαρμένη (cf. l'espressione ἡ τοῦτο ἀξιοῦσα);

– ma l'arte dei Caldei esiste;

– dunque tutti gli eventi accadono secondo il fato.

La contro-argomentazione si articolava forse in *modus ponendo ponens*, confermando l'antecedente del condizionale accolto dai fautori dell'astrologia. Qualora si accolga tale ricostruzione del percorso dialettico apparentemente presupposto dalla posizione degli ἄλλοι sestani, si potrebbero avanzare altre due ipotesi:

1. che la tesi di partenza combattuta sia specificamente stoica;²²

utili rinvii testuali cf. Valgiglio 1993, 182-3 e, con specifico riferimento alla tradizione orfica, ermetica e magica, A.-J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste. I: L'astrologie et les sciences occultes*, Paris 1950², 92 ss.

²¹ Su questo 'principio' — *anche* stoico — utili indicazioni si possono leggere in Bobzien 1998, sp. 56-8.

²² Per un percorso argomentativo analogo (crisippeo), fondato sul richiamo alla divinazione in generale, cf. almeno la testimonianza — e l'accusa di circolarità, su cui cf. tuttavia Hankinson 1988, 138-9 e ora Bobzien 1998, sp. 92 n. 78 — di Diogeniano (*SVF* II 939) e di Alessandro di Afrodisia (*SVF* II 941). Cf. anche Cic., *Fat.* 11 e *Div.* I 127 (= rispettivamente *SVF* II 954 e 944), oltre ai concisi, ma chiari riferimenti dello pseudo-Plutarco (*Fat.* 574E, con il commento di Valgiglio 1993, sp. 183-4), e di Calcidio (= *SVF* II 943).

2. che gli ἄλλοι siano da identificare con pensatori di provenienza scettico-accademica.²³

Comunque si vogliano valutare queste proposte attribuzionistiche, un fatto resta innegabile: le obiezioni anti-astrologiche fondate sulla negazione dell'onnipotenza del fato compaiono — in modo per di più fuggevole — *solo* in questo passo all'interno del *Contro gli astrologi* e lo stesso termine εἰμαρμένη torna, insieme al verbo corrispondente, *solo* più avanti in *M.* V 93. Benché questa considerazione statistica non sia cogente e benché la mera assenza (o rarissima frequenza) del termine non possa essere interpretata come contemporanea ignoranza assoluta del concetto, credo si possa ribadire con certezza che le critiche sestane non debbono essere lette sullo sfondo — o peggio ancora sulla base — dei vari λόγοι anti-fatalistici prodotti nei secoli a lui precedenti, in funzione *anche* anti-astrologica.

La terza obiezione riceve uno spazio decisamente maggiore nell'esposizione di Sesto, forse anche perché a sostenerla erano stati 'non pochi'. Quest'ultima, vaga etichetta — che per confronto con il successivo § 89 sembra interpretabile come *variatio* di πολλοί — induce a pensare che Sesto consideri l'argomentazione esposta ai §§ 45-8 come una sorta di patrimonio comune a più avversari della "scienza" dei Caldei. Non credo infatti che in questo caso 'non pochi' possa essere interpretato nel senso di 'un numero notevole di pensatori appartenenti alla stessa scuola o indirizzo'. La formula dovrebbe indicare piuttosto che, *agli occhi di Sesto*, 'parecchi pensatori, pur appartenenti a indirizzi diversi [o anche non esclusivamente filosofi di professione, forse]' venivano a convergere in questo attacco.

La sintetica presentazione di Sesto solleva comunque non pochi problemi. Una prima difficoltà sorge qualora si tenti di stabilire fino a che punto l'assimilazione da lui proposta sia legittima o se essa non rischi piuttosto di fermarsi a somiglianze soltanto superficiali, perdendo di vista le sostanziali differenze che animavano i 'non pochi' da lui accomunati. Un'altra questione da risolvere è la possibile predilezione di Sesto per *una* specifica formulazione della difesa della piena libertà d'azione umana di fronte al fato. Benché l'individuazione di un'attribuzione univoca per questo tipo di critica appaia oltremodo complessa, provo ad avanzare sin d'ora un'ipotesi, ben

²³ Russo 1972, 193 n. 22 parlava di "una probabile allusione ad eclettico-accademici (cf. del resto il *de fato* di Cicerone)"; cf. anche Giannantoni 1994, 211 e ora Bergua Caverio 1997, 209 n. 316.

consapevole dell'impossibilità di raggiungere al riguardo certezze assolute.²⁴

In questi §§ 45-8 Sesto utilizza a mio avviso, riassumendola e semplificandone gli argomenti, una fonte unica. Molto probabilmente si tratta della versione epicurea di un attacco, che — come si accennava — egli ritiene rappresentativo *anche* dei λόγοι di altri nemici del rigido determinismo. Per rendere meno aleatoria tale proposta interpretativa sarà forse opportuno seguire più da vicino l'articolazione interna dell'argomentazione e cercare di fermare l'attenzione su indizi terminologici o concettuali in grado di offrire se non conferme cogenti, almeno più solidi punti di riferimento.

La premessa da cui si sviluppa tale obiezione è una distinzione nella modalità di accadimento degli eventi, secondo cui alcuni di essi avvengono per necessità (A: τὰ μὲν κατ'ἀνάγκην), altri in base al caso (B: τὰ δὲ κατὰ τύχην), altri infine risultano essere in nostro potere (C: τὰ δὲ παρ'ἡμᾶς). Già la tripartizione potrebbe far pensare — seppure non in modo esclusivo — a una matrice epicurea.²⁵ A quest'ultima sembrerebbe riconducibile anche la modalità di presentazione delle azioni volontarie mediante l'espressione παρ'ἡμᾶς, di casa nella terminologia del Giardino²⁶ rispetto al τὰ/τὸ ἐφ'ἡμῖν di conio peripatetico e d'uso anche stoico e medio-platonico.²⁷ Maggiori indizi

²⁴ Il terreno di origine della polemica potrebbe comunque essere quello di concreti scambi dialettici, come lascia supporre l'occorrenza del verbo che la introduce: συνερωτάω. Russo 1972, 193 n. 23, proponeva di identificare gli οὐκ ὀλίγοι con pensatori peripatetici, ma il suo rinvio all'analogia di metodo che sarebbe riscontrabile in Arist. *Phys.* II 4-6 mi pare davvero poco probante; cf. anche Giannantoni 1994, 211 e Bergua Caverio 1997, 209 n. 317.

²⁵ La tripartizione in esame pare presupposta all'interno di argomentazioni dialettiche antideterministiche riconducibili a Carneade: cf. *infra* n. 31 e ancora Cic. *Fat.* 31, con il commento di Sharples 1991, 181; Favorino *ap.* Gell. XIV 1, 23. Ancora prima, però, la ritroviamo attribuita direttamente a Epicuro, per cui cf. *Ep. Men.* 133, nel testo integrato da Usener, ma non pacificamente accolto da tutti gli interpreti: cf. ad es. l'espunzione radicale proposta in *Epicuri epistulae tres et ratae sententiae a Laertio Diogene servatae*, ed. P. von der Mühl, accedit Gnomologium Epicureum Vaticanum, Stuttgartiae 1922 (repr.: ivi, 1966), *ad loc.* e la diversa soluzione avanzata da C. Diano, 'Note epicuree I', in Id., *Scritti epicurei*, Firenze 1974, 17-20. Cf. anche — seppure con terminologia leggermente diversa — la testimonianza di Aezio (I 29. 5 Diels = Epic. F 376 Us.).

²⁶ Per opportuni rinvii testuali cf., oltre al cap. 20 in Long-Sedley 1987, almeno H. Usener, *Glossarium epicureum*, ed. cur. M. Gigante et W. Schmid, Romae 1977, s.v. ἡμεῖς; C. Diano (ed.), *Epicuri Ethica*, Florentiae 1946, 114 e ora Bobzien 1998, sp. 284 n. 104.

²⁷ Utili riferimenti testuali si trovano in Bobzien 1998, sp. 396 ss., la quale si pronuncia inoltre contro la sostanziale interscambiabilità o quasi sinonimicità delle espressioni appena ricordate, soprattutto a proposito della dottrina crisippea del fato: cf. ancora Bobzien 1998, sp. 283 ss. Le sottili — e sempre stimolanti —

possono forse essere scoperti analizzando i motivi, per cui le presunte predizioni dei Caldei risultano inefficaci rispetto a tutti e tre i tipi di eventi appena elencati.

A. Esse sono *inutili*, per il corso della nostra vita, di fronte agli eventi necessari, che accadono comunque, indipendentemente dal nostro volere, assolutamente inevitabili.²⁸ Sesto ribadisce infatti che solo se fosse in grado di impedire lo svolgersi di tali eventi necessitati una predizione potrebbe dirsi davvero utile. Il cuore dell'obiezione si fonda su un motivo ricorrente di quella che Barnes ha definito la "prima voce" di *M. I-VI*: la non utilità delle τέχναι prese di mira.²⁹ Si tratta di un'accusa che caratterizza in modo specifico la polemica anti-enciclopedica epicurea, cui in più punti Sesto decide di ricorrere per rafforzare il suo attacco. A sostegno dell'ipotesi che anche quanto si legge nella prima parte del § 47 risalga a fonte epicurea, comunque, può essere prodotto un indizio testuale più diretto e meno vago di questo accostamento all'attitudine generale della scuola di Epicuro. Nel corso della sua polemica anti-divinatoria, infatti, Diogeniano attacca la celebrazione crisippea della μαντική — astrologia inclusa, possiamo supporre — come qualcosa di χρεϊώδες... καὶ βιωφέλης e conclude in modo esattamente opposto: essa è ἀχρεϊόν, oltre a rivelarsi addirittura ἀνυπόστατον.³⁰ Nonostante le

distinzioni semantiche o concettuali proposte da questa studiosa meriterebbero una discussione approfondita, che esula tuttavia dagli scopi immediati del presente contributo.

²⁸ 'Che lo vogliamo oppure no', § 47: espressioni analoghe — che richiamano quelle usate a proposito degli eventi sottoposti a rigido determinismo fatalistico (= 'necessari') e classificabili come *simplicia* nella trattazione del cosiddetto ἀργὸς λόγος (cf. le testimonianze di Cicerone e Origene in *SVF* II 956 e 957) — si leggono in Diogeniano, *ap. Eus. PE* VI 8, 30 e 35 (rispettivamente p. 326, 21-2 e 327, 16-7 Mras = *Diog. F* 3 Gercke).

²⁹ Si noti la ripetuta occorrenza del vocabolario dell'utilità, su cui cf. soprattutto Barnes 1988, sp. 63 ss.; si vedano anche Desbordes 1990, 176 e Hankinson 1995, 254.

³⁰ Cf. *Diog. F* 4 Gercke, rispettivamente *ap. Eus. PE* IV 3, 6, p. 171, 3-5 Mras (per la tesi di Crisippo) e IV 3, 13, p. 172, 13-5, dove leggiamo la risposta di Diogeniano, sulla cui "fede" epicurea cf. almeno T. Dorandi, *s.v.* 'Diogénianos 152', in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, II, Paris 1994, 833-4. Più in generale per la polemica di Epicuro contro la μαντική, considerata ἀνυπαρκτός o, se pure per assurdo sussistente, capace di predire eventi che οὐδὲν παρ' ἡμᾶς, cf. *D.L.* X 137, con le osservazioni di C. Diano, 'Note epicuree I', in Id., *Scritti epicurei*, Firenze 1974, 23-5; cf. anche *Schol. in Aesch. Prom.* 624 (= *Us.*, p. 261, 16 ss.) e i testi raccolti sotto il *F* 395 Usener. L'utilità dell'astrologia viene invece programmaticamente difesa da Tolomeo (cf. *e.g. Tetr.* I 3, 5), il quale usa, fra gli altri, il seguente argomento: 'il prevedere avezza e dispone l'animo alla meditazione dei fatti lontani quasi fossero presenti e prepara ad accogliere ogni evento futuro con tranquillità e costanza' (tr. Bezza 1992, 36). Tale argomento, oltre a essere diventato quasi topico

affinità riscontrabili, resta comunque difficile pronunciarsi in modo definitivo, poiché il passo sestano offre unicamente la conclusione di un'argomentazione, omettendo i vari passaggi che dovevano sorreggerla e a partire dai quali si sarebbe potuto istituire un confronto davvero cogente.

B. Neppure gli eventi casuali, del resto, costituiscono un legittimo campo di applicazione delle previsioni astrologiche, in quanto essi, per la loro stessa natura instabile, si sottraggono a ogni possibile predeterminazione. Si tratta di un'obiezione che potremmo definire una sorta di "luogo comune": la ritroviamo infatti utilizzata secondo modalità differenti all'interno dell'armamentario anti-astrologico delle varie scuole che in generale 'si sono prese gioco' della *μαντική*.³¹

C. Presentando l'ultima alternativa da discutere e conformandosi alla propria, peculiare opzione terminologica menzionata in precedenza, la fonte (probabilmente epicurea) di Sesto designa la terza sfera di accadimenti su cui pretende di esercitare un potere predittivo l'astrologia caldaica — quella delle azioni "volontarie" — mediante l'espressione *παρ' ἡμᾶς*. Per confutare tale pretesa, ritenuta assurda, si sottolinea come non vi sia arte alcuna capace di sapere in anticipo come si svolgeranno quelle azioni, il cui attuarsi o meno dipende unicamente da noi e che non hanno sin dall'inizio una causa prestabilita.

Al di là del rigore concettuale che si è disposti a riconoscere a tale argomentazione, mi pare che essa si lasci in ogni caso apprezzare

— perfino in ambito ermetico: cf. Pompeo Faracovi 1996, 92 —, già era stato, pare, di Crisippo (cf. il passo già ricordato in Cic. *Div.* I 82) e di Posidonio (cf. F 165 E-K. = 410 Th.) e già Carneade lo aveva forse combattuto, se a lui possono essere fatte risalire le obiezioni che si leggono in Cic. *Div.* II 20-4. Sulla questione cf. M. Vegetti, 'L'utilità della divinazione. Un argomento stoico in Tolomeo, *tetrabiblos* I 3.5', *Elenchos* 15 (1994), 219-28, mentre sulla posizione di Carneade rispetto allo ἀπροσδόκητον cf. A.M. Ioppolo, 'Carneade e il terzo libro delle *Tusculanae*', *Elenchos* 1 (1980), 76-91.

³¹ E' quanto sottolinea, commentando le citazioni diogeniane, Eusebio (*PE* IV 3, 14, p. 172, 18-9 Mras). Egli fornisce anche al riguardo un elenco ampio — per una lista ancora più ricca cf. ora Bobzien 1998, 4 —, comprendente ἀριστοτελικοί πάντες κυνικοί τε καὶ ἐπικούρειοι καὶ ὅσοι τούτοις ἐφρόνησαν τὰ παραπλήσια. Dietro quest'ultima, generica "etichetta" potrebbero essere ricondotti, per necessità di completezza, pensatori di ascendenza platonica, non solo medio-platonica, ma anche scettico-accademica, meglio carneadea (cf. ad es. Cic. *Div.* II 13-8); cauto sull'attribuzione a Carneade di tali argomentazioni si mostra tuttavia W. Görler, 'Älterer Pyrrhonismus-Jüngere Akademie-Antiokos aus Askalon', in H. Flashar (ed.), *Die Philosophie der Antike*, Bd. 4: *Die hellenistische Philosophie*, Basel 1994, 890. Aggiungo infine che la qualificazione di ciò che è casuale mediante l'aggettivo ἄστατος potrebbe non essere una mera coincidenza terminologica e richiamare forse lessico epicureo: cf. al riguardo almeno D.L. X 133 e F 380 Usener.

anche perché, forse per rendere più efficaci e calzanti le proprie obiezioni, ripropone — fedelmente, credo — alcune espressioni tecniche delle dottrine deterministiche attaccate. Così, per indicare ciò che è *in nostra potestate* all'espressione (tipicamente epicurea) τὰ παρ' ἡμᾶς viene preferita la locuzione τὸ...ἐπ' ἐμοὶ κείμενον, sentita come sostanzialmente equivalente rispetto alla prima.³² Quanto all'accenno alla προκαταβεβλημένη αἰτία, occorre in primo luogo notare che la voce verbale da προκαταβάλλω è un *hapax* in Sesto, a ulteriore conferma che ci troviamo di fronte a terminologia tecnica, probabilmente attinta direttamente dal bersaglio polemico qui preso di mira. A sostegno di questa impressione di lettura mi sembra utile rilevare quanto segue:

1. Diogeniano (*ap. Eus.*, *PE* VI 8,11, p. 324, 3-5 Mras), polemizzando con un procedimento per assurdo contro l'assunzione della dottrina deterministica crisippea da parte degli uomini comuni, attribuisce loro la tesi secondo cui τὰ πάντα κατελιφέναι τὴν εἰμαρμένην καὶ ἀμεταθέτους εἶναι τὰς ἐξ αἰῶνος προκαταβεβλημένας ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς οὐσί τε καὶ γινομένοις αἰτίαις;³³

2. anche Alessandro di Afrodisia sin dall'inizio del suo *De fato*, in sede di giustificazione preliminare dell'importanza e dell'utilità del tema che ha scelto di trattare, contrappone il comportamento di coloro che ritengono che tutto accada ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ καθ' εἰμαρμένην a quello di chi ammette che avvengano alcuni eventi καὶ μὴ τοῦ πάντως ἔσσεσθαι προκαταβεβλημένας αἰτίας ἔχοντα, un'espressione che torna in più punti della successiva trattazione.³⁴

³² Ciò sembra confermato dal γάρ che la introduce; cf. anche W.G. Englert, *Epicurus on the Swerve and Voluntary Action*, Atlanta (Georgia) 1987, 129, nonché K. Janáček, *Sexti Empirici Indices*, editio tertia completior, Firenze 2000, 168, *s.v.* παρ' ἡμᾶς. La medesima interscambiabilità sembra del resto rinvenibile, almeno in un caso, anche nella testimonianza di Diogeniano (*ap. Eus.* *PE* IV 3, 10, p. 172, 4 Mras = Diog. F 4 Gercke). Un'interpretazione diversa del passo offre ora Bobzien 1998, 285 n. 111, la quale, sulla scia della netta distinzione da lei posta tra ἐφ' ἡμῶν e παρ' ἡμᾶς (cf. *supra* n. 27), così scrive: "M 5.48, the only passage I have found which uses the two expressions together, treats παρ' ἡμᾶς as one-sided causative and ἐπὶ *c. dat. pers.* as two-sided potestative, and implies such a relation between the two [*scit*: "It is plausible to assume that everything that happens because of us in the required sense must have been in our power before it happened (...)": *ivi*, 285)]".

³³ L'espressione — al cui interno merita di essere sottolineato l'uso del verbo καταλαμβάνω: cf. Bobzien 1998, 127 — credo possa essere utilmente accostata a una formulazione sicuramente crisippea, che si legge in Cicerone (*Fat.* 21): *omnia fato fieri et ex causis aeternis rerum futurarum*, su cui cf. ancora Bobzien 1998, sp. 72-3.

³⁴ Cf. Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 164, 19-20 Br.; per un elenco degli altri passi cf. l'*Index verborum* di P. Thillet (ed.), Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Traité du destin*, Paris 1984, 80, *s.v.* αἰτία. Cf. anche Alex. Aphr. *Quaest.* I IV, 10, 29 Br.

L'ipotesi più verosimile di fronte a tali concordanze verbali mi pare quella di una comune fedeltà da parte di Alessandro e Diogeniano (e di conseguenza della fonte — epicurea — di Sesto, che potrebbe anche identificarsi a questo punto con Diogeniano stesso) rispetto alle scelte linguistiche tipiche dei loro avversari. Quanto a questi ultimi, si tratta quasi sicuramente di pensatori stoici impegnati a difendere l'idea di una coerente e intangibile *infinita series causarum* dalle obiezioni radicalmente indeterministiche di chi voleva negare *tout court* alle cause antecedenti qualsiasi funzione e ruolo condizionanti la piena libertà umana.³⁵

Al di là di ogni intricata questione attribuzionistica, comunque, l'impressione che si ricava dalla lettura di questi §§ 45-8 appare chiara. L'insieme delle obiezioni fin qui registrate non sembra rappresentare il punto di riferimento privilegiato della polemica sestana (e più in generale pirroniana: cf. ora anche Blank 1998, 107-8). Anche se quantitativamente dominante all'interno della precedente discussione antiastrologica, come riconosce lo stesso Sesto (cf. l'espressione οἱ μὲν... πλείους al § 49), possiamo senz'altro ribadire che non assume un ruolo centrale in *M. V* "le souci qui domine et perpétue le debat, le besoin de dégager la liberté humaine du fatalisme astrologique", per usare le parole di Bouché-Leclercq (1899, 571-2). Essa viene ricordata forse per fornire un quadro il più esaustivo possibile dei vari punti di vista da cui si può criticamente guardare ai fenomeni astrologici e anche naturalmente per far meglio risaltare l'originalità della posizione genuinamente scettica. In realtà le obiezioni cui essa dà luogo non sono altro che 'scaramucce', incapaci di risolvere una volta per tutte la contesa.³⁶

Lo stacco netto fra questa modalità di approccio e quella tipica della ἀγωγή pirroniana è chiaramente segnalato, sempre al § 49, sia sul piano linguistico, mediante la formula ἡμεῖς δέ,³⁷ sia su quello

³⁵ Qualora si accetti tale spiegazione, si potrebbe formulare un'ulteriore ipotesi. E' probabile che προκαταβεβλημένη αἰτία altro non sia che una delle originali espressioni greche utilizzate in ambito stoico per indicare le cause antecedenti — sulla cui centralità filosofica all'interno dell'argomentazione "compatibilista" di Crisippo cf. e.g. Bobzien 1998, sp. 74 e 255 ss.. Materiale a sostegno di tale ipotesi è stato raccolto da M. Liscu, *L'Expression des idées philosophiques chez Cicéron*, Paris 1937, sp. 88-9.

³⁶ Analoga distinzione metodologica fra attacchi superficiali o più approfonditi sorregge anche la polemica di Cicerone: cf. ad es. *Div. II* 124 e soprattutto *II* 26 (anche qui si fa ricorso a una metafora militare).

³⁷ Fin da *M. I* 7 Sesto sembra servirsi di espressioni del genere per marcare la peculiarità degli attacchi pirroniani rispetto al diverso approccio degli Epicurei: cf.

concettuale, attraverso la presentazione del differente metodo di attacco di solito messo in atto dai Pirroniani. Coerentemente rispetto a quanto esposto in altri passi dei suoi scritti e con un atteggiamento che merita altrove la qualifica di ἀπορητικότερον,³⁸ Sesto rivendica a se stesso la capacità di individuare i principi basilari, gli elementi essenziali, su cui di volta in volta si regge il presunto sapere dogmatico oggetto della sua analisi. Questi e solo questi diventano dunque bersaglio delle sue critiche, che sembrano quasi applicare un principio di “economia occamistica”. Anziché moltiplicare inutilmente le obiezioni di dettaglio — o se si vuole, anziché disperdere le forze in scaramucce per nulla o poco decisive — occorre concentrare il fuoco della polemica contro le fondamenta dell’edificio dogmatico che si ha di fronte, poiché solo il loro totale abbattimento sarà garanzia del crollo anche di tutti gli altri aspetti teorici, che su quelle si reggono.³⁹

Tale delimitazione di campo applicata al caso dell’astrologia implica un assalto mirato unicamente alle questioni sollevate dalla determinazione dell’oroscopo al momento della nascita, vero ἀρχή... καὶ ὥσπερ θεμέλιος dell’attività dei Caldei. La strada scelta non si attarda in tappe intermedie. Per raggiungere lo scopo di una totale messa in discussione dell’astrologia basterà mostrare che l’oroscopo, e insieme tutti gli elementi ulteriori della sofisticata partizione che i Caldei imponevano alla volta celeste (centri, aspetti, trigoni, ecc.), si sottrae a ogni forma di determinazione o addirittura di comprensione, ovvero ricade in pieno sotto una delle tipiche φωναί scettiche: il ‘non comprendo’ (cf. § 51 e per ulteriori chiarimenti *P. I* 201).

Blank 1998, sp. XL-XLI e 70. Al riguardo si veda anche Barnes 1988, sp. 59, il quale nutre tuttavia qualche dubbio proprio sul passo che stiamo esaminando, in quanto “the arguments in V 49-105 are not in any obvious way Pyrrhonian in structure and content” (ivi, n. 16); per un’interpretazione diversa cf. le sezioni III e IV di questo contributo.

³⁸ Cf. rispettivamente *P. III* 1 e soprattutto *M. IX* 1 ss. (ove non solo ritorna la metafora militare, ma vi è anche una netta contrapposizione rispetto al differente metodo dell’Accademia scettica), nonché *M. VI* 5 (con le osservazioni di Desbordes 1990, 168-9) e per la radicalità dell’attacco pirroniano anche *M. IX* 12.

³⁹ Tale consapevole selezione sestana omette critiche attestate invece in altre fonti: ad esempio, quella basata sulla determinazione esatta del numero dei pianeti (sono forse più di sette, si chiedeva Favorino, *ap. Gell. XIV* 1, 11-3? Cf. anche Sen. *Nat. Quaest. VI* 24, 3 e *II* 32,7-8); o ancora quella che insisteva sull’effimera piccolezza delle vicende umane rispetto alla grandezza del cosmo (cf. ancora Gell. *XIV* 1, 25); o l’*esplicito* richiamo al contro-esempio dei gemelli (cf. tuttavia *infra* p. 262). Menziono infine — *pace* Russo 1972, XXXIII-XXXIV — un’altra “assenza”, abbastanza sorprendente nel *medico* Sesto, cui pure non era ignota la dottrina della melotesia zodiacale (cf. *M. V* 21-2): quella di una presa di posizione polemica contro la cosiddetta iatromatematica.

Quest'opera di demolizione del segno zodiacale che sorge, 'introvabile' (§ 52), e della funzione predittiva a esso attribuita, che si rivelerà insussistente (§ 54), prende di mira nell'ordine:

A. la determinazione esatta del momento del concepimento e della nascita (§§ 55-67);⁴⁰

B. l'esistenza di uno strumento tecnico (un 'orologio') capace di fissare l'attimo della generazione senza errori (§§ 68-72);

C. l'osservazione puntuale dell'ascensione del segno, cui i Caldei attribuiscono un ruolo fondamentale e da cui essi partono per individuare anche tutti gli altri elementi necessari alla predizione (§§ 73-85).

Non è questa la sede per ripercorrere analiticamente le argomentazioni addotte da Sesto. Vale la pena sottolineare sin d'ora, in ogni caso, oltre alla loro efficacia, riconosciuta anche da interpreti di solito poco teneri nei loro giudizi su Sesto, che esse attaccano probabilmente uno stadio dell'astrologia, che aveva elaborato partizioni — teoricamente fondate, ma forse di fatto irraggiungibili — sempre più minute e sofisticate, proprio per sfuggire a obiezioni precedenti.⁴¹ Mi preme in ogni caso sottolineare almeno due punti.

1. Le critiche sestane possono essere a ragione definite, nella loro globalità, come "scientifiche", intendendo con ciò la loro peculiare dipendenza da osservazioni e attitudini empiristiche o da conclusioni formulate in campo strettamente medico-biologico.⁴²

2. Si tratta di obiezioni "originali", nel senso che nessun altro dei resoconti anti-astrologici a nostra disposizione insiste o fonda su di loro il proprio attacco.⁴³

⁴⁰ Obiezioni analoghe nell'ispirazione, ma non perfettamente identiche nella struttura argomentativa, si leggono in Filone Alessandrino (*De prov.* I 87) e Favorino (*ap. Gell.* XIV 1, 19-20; cf. anche ivi 26). Ancora una volta occorre rilevare che Tolomeo sembra rendersi conto della difficoltà. Egli cerca di evitarla elaborando una complessa relazione simmetrica fra momento del concepimento e momento della nascita, che sembra quasi anticipare il moderno concetto di "eredità astrale": cf. *Tetr.* III 2, 2-4, con il commento di Feraboli 1985, 418-9. Di questa soluzione tolemaica non si fa tuttavia parola in *M. V.*

⁴¹ Cf. Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 589-90, il quale, benché di solito non molto tenero nei confronti di Sesto, riconosce che "ces objections sont très fortes", anche se male organizzate e disposte senza alcuna "progression d'énergie croissante"; cf. anche Pompeo Faracovi 1996, 151.

⁴² Cf. anche Russo 1972, XXXIII. Sulla medesima linea, anche se con argomenti non sfruttati da Sesto, sembra porsi la trattazione riservata da Agostino al destino dei gemelli. Egli, contro Posidonio, chiama esplicitamente in causa sin dall'inizio — ma forse in modo impreciso: cf. I.G. Kidd (ed.), *Posidonius. II. The Commentary*, Cambridge 1988, 2, 437 — l'*auctoritas* di Ippocrate: cf. *Civ. Dei V* 2-6 (parz. = Cic. *Fat.* F 4 e Posid. F 111 E.-K. = 384 Theiler) e *infra* n. 45.

⁴³ A sostegno di tale conclusione si può rilevare la radicale diversità dell'argo-

La peculiarità di queste critiche, del resto, pare esplicitamente difesa dallo stesso Sesto. Nella chiusa del § 85, che funge da ricapitolazione dell'intero attacco finora scagliato contro la pretesa di determinare con esattezza l'oroscopo, egli le considera infatti *sufficienti*, quasi volesse con ciò circoscrivere il campo proprio all'interno del quale vogliono e sanno muoversi i Pirroniani rispetto alle altre scuole filosofiche. Gli attacchi portati da queste ultime contro l'astrologia assumono dunque la funzione di un *surplus*, di un qualcosa che comunque vale la pena citare per rendere sovrabbondante il peso della polemica. Non a caso, infatti, a partire dal § 86 e fino a tutto il § 102, Sesto li registra ἐκ περισσίας, attingendo in modo non meccanico, ma selettivo a una tradizione ben consolidata.

Alla luce di questa precisazione sestana è forse possibile attribuire il giusto significato alla sezione omogenea rappresentata da M. V 86-102. Se è infatti innegabile che essa si rivela utilissima quale ulteriore testimone di una catena ininterrotta di obiezioni antiastrologiche (e dunque adatta a soddisfare le esigenze di una seria *Quellenforschung*), nulla autorizza a considerarla come il nocciolo dell'attacco pirroniano. Al contrario, occorre piuttosto valutarla per quello che è: *un'appendice*, che esibisce in atto la δύναμις ἀντιθετική del vero scettico, sempre pronto a rinvenire (o costruire, se necessario) λόγοι contrapposti. Poiché tuttavia proprio questi 'discorsi' (insieme ad altri, di diversa provenienza, come vedremo subito) riaffiorano prepotentemente in Sesto, non sarà fuori luogo seguire più da vicino lo sviluppo di tali critiche "sovrabbondanti", che vanno a sovrapporsi a quelle più "scientifiche".

Nonostante i risultati negativi precedentemente raggiunti, Sesto concede la comprensibilità del momento esatto dei tempi ascensionali solo per poter formulare una critica, che ha di mira la consuetudine invalsa nella prassi del suo tempo (come anche di quelli passati). Come venivano infatti dati, di norma, i responsi oroscopici? E' difficile pensare che *a ogni nascita* assistesse un astrologo, accomodato su di un'altura a scrutare le stelle, in attesa del segnale del suo collaboratore impegnato a presiedere al parto (cf. il meccanismo descritto in M. V 27-8 e poi criticato ai §§ 68 ss.). Di solito a registrare i primi punti di riferimento non è il Caldeo, ma chi a lui si rivolge per avere un pronostico. Chi tuttavia fa questo è l'uomo della strada,

mento — "un raisonnement extrêmement captieux, trop subtil pour être efficace", come scrive Bouché-Leclercq (1899), 592 — addotto da Favorino (*ap.* Gell. XIV 1, 20-2) per confondere la *ratio* stessa della disciplina astrologica.

che non è in nessun modo esperto della materia, non ha probabilmente alcun interesse a diventarlo ed è quindi privo della indispensabile *τεχνιτεία* (*hapax* in Sesto), che invece una tale osservazione richiederebbe. Anche qualora si volesse giustificare in qualche modo il procedere delle previsioni astrologiche, le si dovrebbe allora considerare false e ingannevoli, perché inficiate alla base, ovvero fin dalla modalità di raccolta dei dati iniziali indispensabili alla formulazione di un corretto oroscopo, sottratti sia alla personale “autopsia” sia alla possibilità di controllo da parte dei Caldei.

Anche l'eventuale replica degli astrologi, che forse avevano rivendicato la possibilità di basarsi non sul tempo esatto dell'ascensione, ma su quello calcolato in modo approssimativo, offre il fianco alla critica sestana. Essa (§ 90), ponendo come presupposti sia la convinzione astrologica secondo cui a una medesima disposizione astrale corrispondono gli stessi eventi nella vita, sia la reciproca affermazione che collega configurazioni astrali diverse a destini differenti, si articola in due punti.

A. Sono in primo luogo evidenti i casi di persone nate all'incirca nello stesso tempo,⁴⁴ ma le cui vite hanno poi preso strade opposte: di massima fortuna, fino a essere re, o di durevole disgrazia, nella condizione di schiavi (§ 88). Né del resto fra i molti venuti al mondo quasi nello stesso istante, si possono annoverare *due* Alessandro Magno o *due* Platone (§ 89). Si tratta di un argomento non nuovo nel suo nucleo essenziale, per il quale Sesto probabilmente dipende dalla medesima fonte cui avevano già fatto ricorso Cicerone e Favorino, come pare confermato dal fatto che non vi è alcuna menzione esplicita del contro-esempio tipico dei diversi destini toccati ai gemelli.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ La clausola restrittiva introdotta da καθ'ὅλοσχερειαν, differenziandosi dal ben più netto *uno et eodem temporis puncto* di Cicerone (*Div.* II 95; cf. anche *Civ. Dei* V 6), conferma forse come il resoconto di Sesto abbia di mira uno stadio successivo della dottrina astrologica, pronta ad abbandonare la pretesa di una determinazione troppo rigida del momento esatto della nascita. Cf. anche *M.* V 64. Per un esempio analogo di vite segnate da opposte fortune cf. anche *Aug. Conf.* VII 6.

⁴⁵ Do qui di seguito un elenco dei passi rilevanti. 1. *Cic. Div.* II 95: la fonte è in questo caso Panezio e il grande uomo, la cui irripetibile unicità viene portata ad esempio, è Scipione l'Africano. 2. *Cic. Div.* II 97 (seconda metà): è probabile che qui Cicerone non dipenda più da Panezio, ma da Carneade *via* Clitomaco, come farebbe supporre anche il richiamo non a un personaggio romano, ma alla grandezza impareggiabile di Omero; cf. al riguardo anche Pease 1963, 515; soprattutto Ioppolo 1984, 84-5 e ora Cambiano 1999, 598; dubbi al riguardo solleva, sulla scia di Giannantoni 1994, Alesse 1994, sp. 245-6. 3. Favorino, *ap. Gell.* XIV 1, 29, che ironicamente — e forse con una rielaborazione personale: cf. al

B. Altrettanto evidente è del resto che uomini venuti al mondo non nello stesso momento e diversissimi fra loro dai più disparati punti di vista vanno tuttavia incontro alla medesima morte, in luttuosi eventi collettivi come la guerra, i crolli di case, i naufragi (§§ 90-1). Anche in questo caso Sesto attinge alla medesima tradizione polemica cui si rifanno Cicerone e Favorino e che è verosimilmente da identificare con Carneade.⁴⁶ Il suo resoconto presenta tuttavia anche elementi di unicità che vale la pena ricordare.

1. In primo luogo, infatti, egli aggiunge i seguenti due esempi (§§ 92-3), non attestati prima di lui⁴⁷ e costruiti sulla base di un'ironica utilizzazione di premesse tratte dalla prassi astrologica:⁴⁸

a. se tutti i nati sotto il segno del sagittario debbono perire sgozzati (dal colpo di una freccia, possiamo forse integrare), allora tutti i barbari morti a Maratona erano nati sotto il Sagittario; ma non si dà il secondo (il loro 'oroscopo' era infatti diverso), dunque neppure il primo;

b. se tutti i nati sotto il 'vaso dell'acquario' debbono morire per naufragio, allora tutti i Greci periti nel mare dell'Eubea durante il ritorno da Troia (cf. Eurip. *Hel.* 1126 ss.) erano del segno dell'Acquario; ma di nuovo non si dà il conseguente, dunque neppure l'antecedente.

2. L'altra peculiarità della trattazione sestana si incontra nella seconda parte del § 93. Qui viene confutata una presunta replica di

riguardo Alesse 1994, 248-9 — allude all'impossibile coesistenza di 'molti Socrati e Antisteni e Platoni uguali tra loro per genere'. 4. Un passo di Filone Alessandrino (*De prov.* I 84-6), in cui egli non solo piega le critiche a scopi diversi, ma ne dà una versione molto "compressa", che risale verosimilmente a Carneade e non a Panezio; sulla questione cf. anche Alesse 1994, 253 n. 85. 5. Si veda infine anche Plin. *Nat. Hist.* VII 165. Ben più vasto spazio sarà invece lasciato da Agostino (cf. *Civ. Dei* V 2 ss. e *supra* n. 42) all'analisi delle vicende gemellari, già criticamente valutate da Diogene di Babilonia (cf. *Cic. Div.* II 90 = *SVF* III Diog. 36) e da Favorino (*ap. Gell.* XIV 1, 26). Cf. anche Sharples 1991, 162.

⁴⁶ Cf. rispettivamente *Cic. Div.* II 97 (prima parte); *Fav. ap. Gell.* XIV 1, 27-8 e anche *Phil. Alex. De prov.* I 87. Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 582 n. 1 ricorda inoltre che anche Calvino amava servirsi di un'argomentazione analoga. Per la paternità carneadea cf. soprattutto Amand 1945, sp. 53-5; a Panezio pensava invece Gianantonio 1994, 218. Di fatto, Sesto ignora la spiegazione dei destini coinvolti in tali comuni catastrofi (vengono citati incendi, pestilenze, inondazioni) offerta da Ptol. *Tetr.* I 3, 7: 'la causa minore sempre soggiace alla maggiore e più valida' (tr. Bezza 1992, 36), ovvero all'influsso generale; cf. anche *infra* p. 264.

⁴⁷ Essi verranno ripresi da Ippolito (*Ref.* IV 5), il quale aggiungerà sì alla vicenda militare di Maratona quella di Salamina, ma che pare comunque dipendere direttamente da Sesto: cf. al riguardo ora Mansfeld 1992, 318.

⁴⁸ E' stato al riguardo ipotizzato, da Amand (1945, 54 n. 1), che Sesto "ait directement ou indirectement emprunté ces considérations à Clitomaque".

parte astrologica, tendente a spiegare le comuni morti collettive come effetto della sorte fatale (il perire in mare) assegnata a uno solo dei reduci da Troia, ricorrendo a un dilemma che sembra rispettare il dettato della φωνή scettica οὐ μᾶλλον (per la possibilità di esprimere tale *vox* anche in forma interrogativa cf. *P.* I 189). Perché infatti — scrive Sesto — dovrebbe avere il sopravvento la vicenda fatale di quell'unico uomo e non piuttosto quella di un altro, destinato all'opposto a *non morire* in mare, ma a salvarsi in terraferma e dunque a coinvolgere in questo esito positivo anche i suoi compagni di viaggio?

Si noti tuttavia che da parte astrologica una possibile spiegazione potrebbe essere individuata nella proposta teorica forte di Tolomeo. Egli invita infatti a considerare sempre *prima* gli influssi di fenomeni 'universali' in quanto dominanti rispetto a quelli relativi alla sfera particolare dei singoli individui (cf. *Tetr.* I 3,7 e soprattutto II 1, *proemio*, oltre alla precedente n. 46). Sesto ignora questa possibile contro-argomentazione e questo ripropone il problema del suo rapporto con Tolomeo. Per quale motivo egli non ne cita e discute le dottrine? Perché scrive prima del grande astronomo (come invita a supporre, molto cautamente, Fazzo 1991, 228 n. 28)? E se invece compone *M. V* dopo la "pubblicazione" della *Tetrabiblos*? Vuole forse in tal caso consapevolmente tacere sulla più radicale difesa della comprensibilità e utilità dell'astrologia? O l'ha letta solo superficialmente, senza coglierne novità e prese di posizione "dissonanti" rispetto alla precedente tradizione astrologica? O semplicemente non ha avuto modo di avere fra le mani l'opera di Tolomeo? Quest'ultima alternativa mi pare la meno improbabile, visti anche i criteri assolutamente diversi e più limitati di circolazione degli scritti nel mondo antico.

La successiva obiezione (§ 94) rientra nuovamente nell'alveo di critiche già sollevate in precedenza contro le previsioni genetliologiche. Sesto sembra voler assumere in questo frangente il ruolo di neutrale *reporter*, che si limita a ricordare quanto leggiamo già in Cicerone e Favorino.⁴⁹ Se il punto di partenza è costituito dalla configurazione astrale, *senza distinzione alcuna per la totalità degli esseri viventi*,⁵⁰ allora dovremmo ipotizzare un destino identico per l'uomo

⁴⁹ Cf. rispettivamente Cic. *Div.* II 98 e Fav. *ap.* Gell. XIV 1, 31; per altri rinvii testuali cf. anche Pease 1963, 516-7.

⁵⁰ E' proprio questo, tuttavia, il probabile punto debole della critica: cf. al riguardo le possibili contro-argomentazioni formulate da Bouché-Leclercq 1899,

e per l'asino nati sotto la medesima partizione dello zodiaco.⁵¹ I fatti, però, ci smentiscono, poiché ci mostrano che il primo, con il favore popolare, ascende alle massime cariche politiche, il secondo resta per tutta la vita inesorabilmente vincolato al peso della sua soma.

Le critiche raccolte a partire dal § 88 si sono finora rivelate come una riproposizione di obiezioni più antiche, risalenti sempre, in ultima analisi, a una tradizione che sembra far capo a Carneade. Nella stessa direzione credo vada interpretata anche la conclusione — molto netta — che si legge nella prima parte del § 95: 'quindi *non è ragionevole* (οὐκ ἔστιν εὐλογον) che la vita sia ordinata secondo i moti degli astri; o se anche è ragionevole, è per noi *del tutto incomprensibile* (πάντως ἀκατάληπτον)'. Alcune delle scelte terminologiche di tale conclusione, evidenziate fra parentesi e in più occasioni sentite o presentate da Sesto come "tecnicamente" accademiche, sembrerebbero confermare questa impressione. Esse consentono forse di interpretare questo giudizio finale come una "parassitaria" assunzione delle movenze dialettiche proprie di pensatori scettico-accademici, che si ergono a difensori di una forma radicale di indeterminismo o, per usare le parole di Bouché-Leclercq (1899, 584), a "partisans de la liberté absolue". La conclusione del § 95 sembra inoltre essere costruita, conformemente a una tipica strategia scettico-accademica, come una replica dialettica a una modalità di argomentazione fondata sul richiamo a ciò che è — o non è — ragionevole (εὐλογον). Essa è più volte attestata in Sesto a proposito, ad esempio, delle "dimostrazioni" stoiche sull'esistenza degli dei (cf. *e.g.* *M.* IX 75; 87; 112 e soprattutto 133-4).⁵²

L'insieme di queste considerazioni e la più esatta contestualizzazione delle argomentazioni in esame credo consenta — *pace* Barnes (1988, 67) — di toglierne la paternità *diretta* a Sesto⁵³.

585-6 n. 4. Un fatto pare comunque innegabile. Sesto ironizza su un'abitudine molto diffusa nei primi secoli della nostra era: quella di interrogare gli astrologi (soprattutto quelli *de circo*, forse) anche in merito ai destini degli animali, in particolare domestici: cf. ancora ivi, 586.

⁵¹ L'accento specifico alla parte o 'porzione' (μῶριον) del segno, piuttosto che genericamente allo stato del cielo e alla composizione o al moto delle stelle come accade in Cicerone e Favorino, costituisce una novità significativa e forse serve a confermare che Sesto conosce una forma di astrologia ormai avviata verso una partizione dello Zodiaco sempre più minuta.

⁵² Un'analoga attitudine polemica, che fa il verso a e poi ribalta la presunta "ragionevolezza" del legame stabilito dagli Stoici fra la capacità divina di prevedere il futuro e la tesi secondo cui tutto accade per necessità e in base al fato si legge anche in un passo del *De Fato* di Alessandro di Afrodizia (cf. *SVF* II 940).

⁵³ Occorre infine ricordare che uno dei due obiettivi che fin dall'inizio si

Una maggiore indipendenza da fonti antecedenti sembra invece caratterizzare i successivi §§ 95-102 — stando almeno ai confronti che possiamo stabilire sulla base della lacunosa documentazione a nostra disposizione. Essi conservano infatti “une argumentation répartie en cinq chefs (...), destinée à montrer le ridicule et l’absurdité des influences zodiacales sur la destinée des nouveau-nés”.⁵⁴ Benché Sesto dichiari che la *vis* polemica cui attinge sia la medesima utilizzata nelle sezioni precedenti, appare chiaro come il bersaglio preso di mira condizioni notevolmente la sua analisi. Esso è infatti costituito da teorie astrologiche risibili e difficilmente difendibili, che pretendono di conformare i caratteri degli uomini ai vari tipi di segni dello zodiaco.

Non è questa la sede per ripercorrere in dettaglio i singoli passi dell’attacco di Sesto, anche se quanto meno occorre ricordare da una parte che egli trova spazio (cf. § 99) per negare alle varie parti e sottoparti dello zodiaco la funzione di vere e proprie cause efficienti delle diverse forme e tipologie umane;⁵⁵ dall’altra che l’ultima obiezione (cf. § 102), nonostante alcune differenze e al di là dell’estrema sintesi che caratterizza la trattazione sestana, sembra riprendere un tema caro a Carneade, quello dei cosiddetti νόμια βαρβαρικά, di cui troviamo traccia già in Cicerone.⁵⁶

III. Quest’accusa chiude l’insieme delle obiezioni “sovrabbondanti” selezionate da Sesto a ulteriore sostegno delle critiche “scientifiche”

propone di raggiungere Tolomeo — forse proprio in risposta a polemiche quali quelle registrare nel conclusivo e drastico giudizio riportato in *M. V* 95 — è quello di mostrare ὅτι καταληπτὴ ἡ δι’ἀστρονομίας γνώσις καὶ μέχρι τίνος. E’ questo il titolo del cap. 2 del libro primo della *Tetrabiblos*, su cui cf. Fazzo 1991, 222 ss. e soprattutto Bezza 1992, 40 ss. L’altro, come già accennato, mira invece a difenderne l’utilità (forse di nuovo in polemica con gli attacchi sferrati soprattutto da Epicurei e Scettici pirroniani?): cf. *supra* n. 30.

⁵⁴ Amand 1945, 396 n. 2, il quale non fornisce tuttavia indicazioni ulteriori su tale partizione, limitandosi a ricordare come solo la seconda delle obiezioni sestane venga sinteticamente ripresa anche da S. Basilio.

⁵⁵ Sesto — sulla cui obiezione cf. anche Ioppolo 1984, 85 n. 36 — cita quasi di sfuggita questa funzione causativa attribuita alle parti dello zodiaco — su cui cf. Bezza 1992, 48 —, senza soffermarsi sulle conseguenze “fatalistiche” che essa inevitabilmente introduce. Su di esse insisitono invece altri autori, come ad es. lo pseudo-Plutarco, particolarmente attento a definire gli astri quali meri ‘segni’, una conclusione su cui convergono anche i resoconti critici di un Filone Alessandrino (ad es.: *Opif. Mundi* cap. 19, §§ 58-61) e di Plotino (cf. soprattutto *Enn.* II 3 e III 1). Cf. anche *supra* p. 249 e *infra* n. 60.

⁵⁶ Cf. Cic. *Div.* II 96-7 e le osservazioni di Amand 1945, 56 n. 1, nonché Alesse 1994, sp. 250-3. Cf. ancora Amand 1945, 55-60 per altri rinvii testuali.

avanzate nella parte centrale di *M. V.* Da questo punto in poi egli torna a far sentire la genuina voce pirroniana, come mostra in modo chiaro la stessa formula di apertura del § 103 (καθόλου δέ,...). Essa sembra quasi segnare un cambio di ritmo nell'esposizione e attesta la volontà di trarre una sorta di "morale generale" rispetto ai punti deboli della pratica astrologica. Solo in due delle 54 occorrenze all'interno del *corpus* sestano, infatti, καθόλου è seguito dalla particella δέ e in entrambi i casi l'espressione serve come formula introduttiva di una ricapitolazione generale, contrassegnata da argomentazioni che si lasciano individuare come genuinamente pirroniane.⁵⁷ Il contenuto delle obiezioni finali sestane, inoltre, benché condensato in soli tre paragrafi, presenta una tale densità di termini tecnici, da suffragare tale impressione (e da rendere forse meno arduo il compito dell'interprete).

Per smascherare i difetti dei Caldei, Sesto prende infatti le mosse dalla presentazione che essi stessi fanno del loro metodo. Essi pretendono di co-osservare insieme le configurazioni astrali da una parte e i diversi eventi della vita umana dall'altra,⁵⁸ come se la relazione che lega le une agli altri fosse assimilabile a quella che esiste fra i segni commemorativi e ciò che essi significano, ovvero qui: le vicende che toccheranno in sorte all'uomo, equiparate così a realtà solo temporaneamente non evidenti.⁵⁹ A questa indebita presa di posizione Sesto contrappone, in modo indiretto, quello che dovrebbe essere il coerente atteggiamento degli astrologi. Essi dovrebbero considerare gli astri *stricto sensu* come segni indicativi⁶⁰ di un qualcosa

⁵⁷ Oltre al nostro passo cf. *M. II* 47, in cui viene riassunta una serie di obiezioni (*M. II* 43-7), volte a mostrare l'ingiustizia della retorica da un punto di vista e con argomenti diversi da quelli utilizzati nei paragrafi precedenti (*M. II* 20-42), esplicitamente attribuiti a οἱ περὶ τὸν Κριτόλαον καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀκαδημίας, ἐν οἷς ἐστὶ Κλειτόμαχος καὶ Χαρμίδας (*M. II* 20) e poi più in generale a οἱ Ἀκαδημαϊκοί (*M. II* 43).

⁵⁸ Il verbo utilizzato, συμπαρτηρῶ, ricorre sempre e solo per descrivere il meccanismo inferenziale debole all'opera nel caso dei segni commemorativi: cf. *P. II* 100-1 e i passi paralleli in *M. VIII* 152 e 154; e ancora *M. VIII* 143.

⁵⁹ Utili osservazioni e ulteriori rinvii al riguardo si possono leggere in Desbordes 1990, 178. Per la possibilità che anche agli occhi degli Stoici "the kind of sign which divinatory signs most closely resembles is the 'commemorative' sign" cf. Long-Sedley 1987, I, 265.

⁶⁰ Non a caso Sesto ricorre qui al verbo ἐνδείκνυμαι, utilizzato nello stesso senso anche in altri passi: cf. ad es. *M. VIII* 195; 208; 263 (bis); 264; 274 (bis). La considerazione degli astri come "conditional signs" (Bobzien 1998, 176 n. 75) inviati direttamente dagli dei è sicuramente stoica, molto probabilmente già crisippea: cf. almeno *M. IX* 132; Cic. *Fat.* 14-5 e soprattutto Cic. *Div.* II 130 (= *SVF II* 1189); si veda anche *supra* n. 55.

— gli eventi futuri delle singole esistenze — che risulta per noi *per natura* non evidente. Le tesi degli astrologi, infatti, sono false perché “the nature which they purport to observe is not open to human scrutiny”, come spiega Barnes (1988, 73).

L'obiezione diretta — e personale, come farebbe supporre l'uso di *φημί* — di Sesto assume tuttavia una forma diversa, che ricorre alla più volte sperimentata tecnica della dimostrazione per assurdo. Ammettiamo pure che si possa concedere quanto pretendono i Caldei. Per poter giungere a formulare una previsione davvero salda, che consentisse di conoscere la relazione (di causalità?) fra una determinata configurazione delle stelle e un determinato effetto sulla terra, dovremmo essere in grado di co-osservare questi due aspetti insieme e ripetutamente, verificando in modo non occasionale che quanto risulta dal nesso astrale rimane costante *in tutti i possibili casi esaminati* (ἐπὶ πάντων). Per rafforzare la propria argomentazione, Sesto inserisce al § 104 un parallelo con la prassi medica, ancora una volta con un verbo “tecnico” del lessico pirroniano, per di più usato alla prima persona plurale (ἐν τῇ ἱατρικῇ ἐτηρήσαμεν). L'osservazione empirica del rapporto letale esistente fra una ferita inferta al cuore e la comparsa della morte,⁶¹ estesa a una molteplicità di casi (Dione, Teone, Socrate ‘e molti altri’), diviene allora il modello con cui confrontare il modo di procedere della μαθηματική. Se gli astrologi vogliono dare un fondamento accettabile alle loro previsioni, bisogna che la configurazione delle stelle — al pari dei colpi mortali al cuore — sia oggetto di osservazione empirica non una sola volta, ma *πολλάκις ἐπὶ πολλῶν*, affinché possa davvero funzionare da indizio o segno rivelatore di un certo modo di vita. E' proprio quest'ultima condizione, tuttavia, a non poter essere soddisfatta nella prassi astrologica. Quel segno del cielo così importante ai fini della

⁶¹ Credo che alla lezione stampata da Mau (ἡ τῆς καρδίας περίψυξις ἐστὶ θάνατος, attestata solo da S) vada preferita quella di tutti gli altri manoscritti: ἡ τῆς καρδίας τῶσις αἰτιὸν ἐστὶ θανάτου: cf. già Bury 1949, 368. E' quanto suggeriscono anche Barnes 1988, 72 n. 40 e Hankinson 1995, 349 n. 15, il quale giustamente fa notare che “the Empirical doctors here referred to were quite happy to speak (non-theoretically) of causes”; per ulteriori rinvii testuali e bibliografici al riguardo cf. ancora Hankinson 1995, sp. 235-6. L'esempio del fermento mortale al cuore — per cui si veda anche *M. VIII* 254-5 — rientra esplicitamente nella casistica dei segni rammemorativi: cf. *M. VIII* 153 e 157. Esso viene inoltre classificato fra quei nessi fattuali di cui abbiamo costantemente esperienza in *Gal. Subf. Emp.* 58, 18-20. Per il ruolo che esso svolge fra i ‘principi’ dell'arte medica empirica, cf. anche più in generale *ivi*, 44, 4-51, 9 (sp. 44, 15 ss.), mentre per una lettura che ne sottolinea il carattere necessario e non reciproco cf. *Quint. V* 9.5 e 7.

relazione di conseguenzialità appena ricordata sfugge infatti alla ricerca dell'uomo; e questo per due motivi. In primo luogo perché — per ammissione dei suoi stessi cultori (ὥς φασί, § 105), molto probabilmente debitori in tal caso di speculazioni cosmologiche di provenienza stoica — si offre allo sguardo solo ogni 9977 anni⁶². In secondo luogo perché nulla esclude che l'accumulo e la trasmissione delle conoscenze — la ἱστορικὴ παράδοσις, di cui probabilmente si facevano gran vanto gli astrologi⁶³ — vengano improvvisamente interrotti da eventi o di peso universale (ad es., secondo alcuni, una distruzione cosmica) o di portata più ristretta.⁶⁴

⁶² Sulla teoria della ἀποκατάστασις (§ 105, *hapax* in Sesto) cf. soprattutto le testimonianze di Ario Didimo (= *SVF* II 599) e di Nemesio (= *SVF* II 625, in cui come nel nostro passo ritroviamo l'accento sia al riallineamento dei pianeti sia al fatto che la distruzione e rigenerazione del tutto avviene οὐχ ἅπαξ, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις). Essa chiama immediatamente in causa la dottrina stoica della conflagrazione, forse debitrice di speculazioni associate in una testimonianza di Seneca (*nat. quaest.* III 29) al nome di Beroso e per cui mi limito a rinviare ai contributi di J. Barnes, 'La doctrine du retour éternel', in J. Brunschwig (ed.), *Les Stoïciens et leur logique*, Paris 1978, 3-20; J. Mansfeld, 'Providence and the Destruction of the Universe in Early Stoic Thought, With Some Remarks on the "Mystery of Philosophy"', in M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions*, Leiden 1979, 129-88; A.A. Long, 'The Stoics on World-Conflagration and Everlasting Recurrence', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985), 13-37 (Supplement: R.H. Epp, ed., *Recovering the Stoics*, "Spindel Conference 1984"); per il suo 'peso' astrologico cfr. anche Ippollo 1984, 78. Per una possibile contro-replica astrologica all'obiezione sestana cf. invece Hankinson 1988, 151 n. 109 e 1995, 261; Pompeo Faracovi 1996, 153.

⁶³ E' quanto possiamo ricavare anche dalla testimonianza di Cicerone (in positivo: *Div.* I 2; 36-7; in negativo: *II* 97) e di Favorino (*ap.* Gell. XIV 1, 2 e 17). Al di là di questa consonanza, non mi sembra esistano altre corrispondenze, né linguistiche né tanto meno di impianto concettuale, fra questi testi. Una menzione a sé merita infine un passo di Tolomeo (*Tetr.* I 2, 10 ss.), che pare in più punti — a cominciare dalla valutazione positiva della συνεχὴς ἱστορία degli astrologi — quasi una risposta puntuale alle critiche qui registrate da Sesto.

⁶⁴ Cf. anche *M.* V 80. Difficile è individuare con certezza chi si nasconde dietro questi anonimi 'alcuni'. Russo 1972, 208 n. 47 pensa si tratti di una "allusione ad antiche concezioni ciclico-evoluzionistiche di cui è cenno in Plat. *Tim.* 21d sgg. [incluso il tema della rottura della continuità della memoria] e in Arist. *De philos.* fr. 8 Ross". Sempre in Aristotele cenni analoghi si possono forse leggere in *De caelo* I 10, 279b19; *Meteor.* I 14, 352a28-32 e b17-8, oltre che nel F 19 Ross, un passo tratto da Censorino, su cui cf. tuttavia le osservazioni di B.L. van der Waerden, 'Das Große Jahr und die ewige Wiederkehr', *Hermes* 80 (1952), 133-6; cf. inoltre Theophr. T. 184 FHS&G. Seguendo alcune indicazioni di A. Grilli, 'A proposito di Origene *Contra Celsum* VI 64', *Elenchos* 17 (1996), 423-6 si potrebbe aggiungere, a ulteriore sostegno di una genesi nell'ambito del platonismo, il confronto con i seguenti passi: Pl. *Leg.* 677a-b (ma cf. anche *Criti.* 109d, 111a-b, 112a e *Pol.* 270b-d); [Arist.], *De mundo* 397a27-33; Cic. *Somm.* VII 23; la parte conclusiva della testimonianza di Origene che si legge in *SVF* II 1174. Mi limito infine a segnalare che l'idea di una distruzione del cosmo viene associata anche a posizioni epicuree: cf. ad es. *M.* X 188 e Lucr. V 338-47, 380-415, anche se in questi passi non vengono forniti particolari sulla portata degli eventi distruttori.

IV. Vario è stato il giudizio espresso sul valore di queste ultime critiche, che ritroviamo solo in Sesto.⁶⁵ Al di là di ogni controversia interpretativa al riguardo, comunque, mi pare molto più produttivo fornire, in sede di conclusione, un duplice chiarimento:

- 1) sul vero obiettivo della polemica sestana;
- 2) sui presupposti teorici che sembrano costituirne implicitamente la base.

1. Come abbiamo visto sin dall'accurata distinzione semantico-concettuale proposta nei paragrafi iniziali di *M. V*, Sesto pare interessato a circoscrivere il proprio attacco a un piano squisitamente "tecnico". I suoi "nemici" *non sono* filosofi di professione, i quali, nell'ambito di una più generale presa di posizione teorica — che coinvolge principi insieme fisici, etici e teologici — si sono occupati *anche* di questioni astrologiche. Il suo bersaglio è costituito piuttosto dall'applicazione pratica dell'arte degli oroscopi, dietro la quale è forse possibile rintracciare all'opera *anche* più o meno sottintese dottrine o *Weltanschauungen* filosofiche, le quali non rappresentano tuttavia in alcun modo *per Sesto* l'aspetto fondamentale delle concrete predizioni di cui si fanno vanto i Caldei. Questo è lo spirito che anima la polemica sestana, che viene di conseguenza strutturata in modo ben diverso rispetto alle precedenti trattazioni anti-astrologiche. Questa diversità non va certo interpretata nel senso dell'elaborazione di critiche assolutamente nuove (che pure si lasciano forse in qualche caso scoprire). Come è lecito aspettarsi, vista l'attitudine "camaleontica" sistematicamente messa in campo da Sesto, molto materiale precedente — soprattutto, ovviamente, di provenienza scettico-accademica — viene riutilizzato in *M. V*, ma l'intento di fondo è nuovo, "inaudito" fino a quel momento⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ Esse rappresentano qualcosa di "more definite" per Pease 1963, 515, denotano una certa originalità per Fazzo 1991, sp. 229 e sono decisamente "non banali" per Pompeo Faracovi 1996, 152, mentre vengono apertamente criticate da Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 574 n. 2.

⁶⁶ In tal senso — e alla luce dell'assenza di un sistematico intento polemico contro forme di rigido determinismo astrale — appaiono meno sorprendenti, direi quasi legittime anche alcune significative 'omissioni'. In *M V* non compaiono infatti argomenti — 'fisici', 'logici' o 'etici' che siano — contro la dottrina della fatale concatenazione delle cause; né si fa cenno alla questione della responsabilità umana, con la connessa attribuzione di lodi e biasimi resa inutile dall'onnipotenza della εἰμαρμένη; né si insiste sui palesi fallimenti o sulla casualità dei successi nelle predizioni; né si rimprovera all'astrologia di non avere un proprio, specifico e individuabile campo di indagine; né emergono modelli aitiologici forti, cui essa — al pari di ogni altra specie di divinazione — dovrebbe conformarsi per potersi dire davvero scienza; né viene tematizzata la difficile relazione fra πρόνοια e fato,

Tutto questo può essere spiegato non chiamando in causa l'arbitrarietà o la presunta incompletezza del resoconto sestano, quanto piuttosto alla luce di una contrapposizione chiaramente enunciata in *M. XI* 165. Si tratta infatti non di mostrare le conseguenze — inaccettabili κατὰ τὸν φιλόσοφον λόγον — che derivano dal ruolo attribuito alla divinazione (e in particolare all'astrologia) all'interno della dottrina stoica, come era stato ad esempio nel caso della polemica di un Carneade o di un Diogeniano. La minaccia si situa sul piano della legittimità di una τέχνη:⁶⁷ essa chiama dunque in causa uno degli elementi basilari delle regole di condotta accettate ὁδοξάστως dallo scettico e va affrontata κατὰ τὴν ἀφιλόσοφον τήρησιν. Si tratta allora — e il problema era forse reso più pressante dalla capillare diffusione della prassi astrologica all'epoca di Sesto⁶⁸ — di individuare:

a. da una parte la “malafede epistemologica” della γενεθλιαλογία, che sembrava interpretare surrettiziamente il nesso astri/eventi terrestri nei termini di un'inferenza basata sul meccanismo dei segni rammemorativi;

b. dall'altra la sua sterilità euristica, smascherata dall'impossibilità di una corretta osservazione o τήρησις, quale quella rivendicata da Sesto per la medicina, anzi più in particolare per la medicina empirica.

Quest'ultimo punto induce infine a spendere qualche parola anche sul tipo di scetticismo che caratterizza in generale *M. V.*⁶⁹ La questione, sollevata da Barnes (1988, sp. 72 ss.), è quella di una possibile “schizofrenia” sestana, ovvero della presenza di due “voci” in tutto *M. I-VI*: l'una moderatamente, l'altra radicalmente scettica; l'una pronta a portare attacchi locali e circoscritti nei confronti delle arti esaminate, l'altra impegnata a demolirne globalmente attendibilità e valore. La forza delle critiche introduttive (cf. *supra* pp. 244-7),

mentre la difesa delle azioni riconducibili alla sfera di ciò che è in nostro potere merita — come abbiamo visto — solo un fugace cenno.

⁶⁷ Per un elenco dei caratteri positivi attribuibili alla nozione pirroniana (sestana) di τέχνη rinvio all'ottimo, esaustivo *résumé* di Blank 1998, XXXIV.

⁶⁸ Per una sintetica descrizione del “mondo sociale” degli astrologi cf. Barton 1994, sp. 157 ss.; utili sono anche le caute osservazioni, statistiche e “sociologiche”, di D. Baccani, *Oroscopi greci. Documentazione papirologica*, Messina 1992, 21-4 e 54-6.

⁶⁹ Limite per ora le osservazioni a *M. V.*, perché per una generalizzazione dei risultati raggiunti occorrerebbe sottoporre a indagine sistematica tutto *M. I-VI*. Una conclusione mi pare comunque indubitabile, ovvero che *M. I-VI* nella sua totalità non nasconde nessuna forma di dogmatismo negativo: cf. ora Blank 1998, sp. L-LV.

lascerebbe ragionevolmente supporre che proprio quest'ultima sia "the attitude which Sextus himself seems to take to astrology in *MV*", come precisa ancora Barnes (1988, 54). Anzi, anche qualora si volessero rintracciare elementi di scetticismo moderato nella registrazione degli attacchi di derivazione non pirroniana, quello che appare innegabile è proprio la radicalità delle obiezioni che chiudono lo scritto, ricollegandosi circolarmente a quelle esposte nella seconda parte del § 2. Non si tratta di negare esistenza agli oggetti da cui muovono e su cui esercitano il loro presunto potere predittivo le dottrine dei Caldei, come era invece evidente nel caso della retorica (*M. II*), della geometria (*M. III*), dell'aritmetica (*M. IV*). Neppure si tratta, però, di "purgare" l'astrologia di qualche marginale fallacia, lasciandone comunque in piedi la struttura complessiva. La posta in gioco è ben più elevata e riguarda l'impossibilità di estendere a quest'arte il solo approccio possibile nei confronti delle realtà di cui essa si occupa. Il "naufragio epistemologico" dell'astrologia è da questo punto di vista completo e l'assalto sestano pare dunque mostrare i caratteri di una demolizione senza confini.

Eppure, proprio l'enunciazione di una sorta di modello alternativo — quello medico (nella sua versione empirica) — non lascia di fronte agli occhi del lettore soltanto un deserto di macerie. Anche gli astri e i fenomeni terrestri potrebbero essere legittimamente indagati, se non si cedesse alla tentazione dogmatica di stabilire nessi inferenziali cogenti e necessari, ma ci si accontentasse di esplorare ed esibire solo quelle connessioni garantite da un'osservazione ripetuta e costante, forse sorretta, sul versante teorico, da un'implicita fiducia nella regolarità del corso della natura. L'insistenza sul ruolo della *τήρησις* e della memoria pare difficilmente interpretabile come un mero diversivo dialettico. Piuttosto, credo che essa sia da intendere come "an untheoretical account of how we come to have expert knowledge" (Frede 1990, 249), senza dover ricorrere ad alcun tipo di inferenza razionale in senso stretto.⁷⁰ Mi sembra allora che ci

⁷⁰ E questo probabilmente aiuta anche a chiarire i motivi dell'apprezzamento per l'astronomia di un Eudosso o di un Ipparco. Sulla funzione attribuita alla *τήρησις* — che non è "an explanatory hypothesis or an inference — it is simply an accumulation of joint observations, it is *ἐμπειρία*. Nor is the *τήρησις* a causal conjecture": Barnes 1988, 72 — mi limito a rinviare, oltre alle occorrenze in *M. V*, ad alcuni passi particolarmente significativi: *M. VII* 436; *I* 207; e in contesti etici *P. I* 23; *II* 246 e 254; *III* 235; cf. anche Blank 1998, 212-3. Sui limiti entro cui perfino lo scettico — vicino alle posizioni della medicina empirica — pare legittimato ad accogliere una forma di generalizzazione empirica si legga per esteso il passo conservato in *M. VIII* 288. Più in generale sulla questione cf. Gal. *Subf. Emp.* 58, 15

troviamo di fronte al lato meno “rozzo” dello scetticismo di Sesto, le cui conclusioni rappresentano verosimilmente il segno o la conferma di una sua positiva accettazione — forse non esclusivamente limitata a questo stadio della sua “carriera” — di una forma raffinata di empirismo medico.

Possono dunque essere sciolti in questo senso i dubbi di Barnes (1988, 71-2). Egli, sottolineando come “it is not clear what we should make of V 104”, ritiene che “we are not obliged to suppose that Sextus is speaking strictly”, come medico insomma, anzi come medico empirico. A mio avviso, invece, è proprio questa la “voce” che domina i paragrafi conclusivi di *M. V.* Essa si presta bene a essere interpretata, su di un piano più generale, come “an Empiricist alternative to the Rationalist constructions” (ivi, 70), valida a proposito di ogni tipo di τέχνη e probabilmente accostabile all’elaborata versione di ‘memorismo’ ricostruita a proposito della figura di Menodoto da Michael Frede (cf. Frede 1990, sp. 248-9).⁷¹

ss. e *Meth. med.* X 126 K., nonché le utilissime considerazioni di Frede 1990, sp. 243.

⁷¹ Questo contributo è parte integrante di un più ampio progetto, finalizzato a una nuova traduzione e commento del *Contro gli astrologi* e finanziato dalla “Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung”, grazie alla concessione di uno *Stipendium*, di cui ho potuto godere nel periodo febbraio 1998-giugno 1999 presso l’Università di Konstanz, sotto l’amichevole e attenta responsabilità scientifica del Prof. Gereon Wolters. Per ulteriori dettagli e osservazioni più particolareggiate su punti dello scritto sestano qui trascurati mi limito a rinviare al prodotto finale di tale ricerca: Sesto Empirico, *Contro gli astrologi*, a cura di Emidio Spinelli, Napoli 2000.

Il mio grazie sincero va a tutti coloro che hanno avuto la pazienza di leggere e commentare, con mio grande profitto, una prima versione di questo lavoro: Bruno Centrone, Riccardo Chiaradonna, Tiziano Dorandi, Gabriele Giannantoni — la cui presenza ricordo qui con commozione — e soprattutto Anna Maria Ioppolo, che mi ha costantemente fornito utili indicazioni e spunti di riflessione. Grande beneficio ha tratto la versione finale anche dalle osservazioni e obiezioni degli altri partecipanti al *Symposium Hellenisticum*. Un ringraziamento particolarmente sentito debbo a Jonathan Barnes, Susanne Bobzien, David Sedley, Robert Sharples e soprattutto Giuseppe Bezza, per avermi inviato dettagliati commenti scritti. Resta inteso, comunque, che di errori e sviste ancora presenti sono personalmente responsabile.

APPENDICE

Sesto 'testimone' astrologico: M. V 5-42

La descrizione delle credenze 'zodiacali' e 'planetarie' degli astrologi combattuti da Sesto, benché schematica, sembra in ogni caso possedere un grado di attendibilità non trascurabile e merita pertanto qualche aggiuntiva parola di commento. E questo se non altro perché essa viene riferita ὅσπερ κατήχημεθα (§ 5). Il verbo è un *hapax*, ma il sostantivo corrispondente, κατήχησις, ricorre in altre due occasioni (M. I 7 e 310), sempre a designare — anche con forte sfumatura ironica, come nel caso della spiegazione dell'epigramma callimacheo su Diodoro Crono in M. I 310 — il possesso saldo di una conoscenza, il distillato di un'istruzione particolareggiata.

Cominciamo allora dalle notizie relative allo zodiaco, su cui cf. in generale, oltre alle "classiche" pagine di Bouché-Leclercq (1899, sp. 124 ss.), l'utile sintesi di Barton (1994) sp. 92 ss.; sulla sua "storia" si veda almeno van der Waerden 1953. All'interno del resoconto sestano, sui cui dettagli non è qui possibile soffermarsi e che necessiterebbe senza dubbio di ulteriori indagini, ma che in ogni caso testimonia "uno sforzo di precisa documentazione sulla materia", come scrive la Pompeo Faracovi (1996, 150), mi limito a sottolineare i seguenti elementi:

1. la suddivisione dei segni ai §§ 6-11 in maschili/femminili, per cui cf. G. Bezza, *Le dimore celesti. Segni e simboli dello zodiaco*, Milano 1998, 18-21; bicorporei/non bicorporei, su cui cf. soprattutto W. Hübner, *Die Eigenschaften der Tierkreiszeichen in der Antike. Ihre Darstellung und Verwendung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Manilius*, Wiesbaden 1982 ("Sudhoffs Archiv", H. 22), 74 ss. e 104 s.; 'tropici' (ovvero qui: solstiziali)/solidi; essa si lascia accostare non alla più antica, più particolareggiata, ma meno rigorosa partizione di Manilio (cf. II 150-264 e per utili rinvii Manilio 1996, 307ss.), quanto piuttosto — pur con qualche doveroso *distingua*: si noti ad es. la mancata menzione dei segni equinoziali (Ariete e Bilancia: cf. al riguardo Bezza 1992, 228-9 e relative note) — a quella molto più semplice (ed esclusivamente "geometrica", secondo Feraboli 1985, 382) di Tolomeo (cf. rispettivamente *Tetr.* I 13 e 12), anche se forse Sesto — e Ippolito (*Ref.* V 2,13), che da lui dipende (cf. *supra* n. 47) — "ne paraissent pas avoir lu Ptolomee", come conclude Bouché-Leclercq (1899, 153 n. 1);

2. la traccia di una probabile reinterpretazione personale sestana — cf. l'occorrenza di οἶμαι — in quanto si legge nel § 8 a proposito delle presunte relazioni fra i principi della dottrina numerologica dei Pitagorici (monade, diade e così via, secondo l'alternanza di numeri dispari/pari) e i generi maschio/femmina; tali relazioni paiono solo implicitamente operanti nell'esposizione di Tolomeo, mentre saranno più tardi rese esplicite, ad esempio, da Paolo Alessandrino;

3. la divisione al § 9 di ogni segno in δωδεκατημόρια — su cui cf. almeno Neugebauer-van Hoesen 1959, 6 —, ognuna delle quali alternativamente maschile e femminile, sembra poter essere accostata soprattutto all'esposizione di Vettio Valente (cf. *Anth.* I 12), registrata anche in Ptol. *Tetr.* I 22,1 (cf. anche I 13) e ancora prima in Man. II 693 ss., su cui cf. Manilio 1996, 308-9 e 345-6;

4. al § 13 l'esemplificazione della dislocazione dei 'centri' o 'cardini' fatta a partire non dal segno dell'Ariete (cf. ad es. Ptol. *Tetr.* I 10,2 e II 11), ma da quello del Cancro, potrebbe derivare da una tradizione greco-egiziana pre-ellenistica, in ogni caso pre-posidoniana: sulla questione cf. lo scolio al v. 545 dei *Fenomeni* di Arato e più in generale Bezza 1995, 680, oltre a Bouché-Leclercq 1899, sp. 129 e 137 n. 2;

5. ai §§ 14ss. l'associazione di ἀπόκλιμα e ἐπαναφορά dei vari cardini a quelli che Firmico Materno (cf. soprattutto II 16-20) chiamerà *secunda* e *pigra/deiecta loca*; tracce di questa dottrina si lasciano cogliere anche in altri autori, come Vettio Valente, Porfirio, Paolo Alessandrino, Eliodoro, ma non in Tolomeo, per il quale cf. almeno *Tetr.* III 11;

6. al § 20 il cenno alla tesi di coloro secondo cui la δύναμις, soprattutto nel senso di facoltà/capacità di κακοποιεῖν (o meno) degli astri varia a seconda delle posizioni assunte nelle varie 'case' richiama la cautela interpretativa dello stesso Tolomeo, per cui cf. soprattutto *Tetr.* I 5; 8,3 e per altri rinvii Bezza 1992, 84 ss. e 340. Si noti tuttavia che la menzione degli ὁστέρες, apparentemente fuori luogo all'interno di una trattazione che Sesto dichiara dedicata ai segni, avrebbe forse trovato più adeguata collocazione al successivo § 30;

7. viene ricordata, stavolta coerentemente, la sola melotesia zodiacale (§§ 21-2) — da confrontare almeno con Man. II 453-65, 704-8 e Firm. II 24; per altri rinvii cf. Manilio 1996, 329 e ora Funghi-Decleva Caizzi 1999, 601ss. — e non quella planetaria, per cui cf. soprattutto Ptol. *Tetr.* III 13,5, Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 320-6 e per ulteriori rinvii Feraboli 1985, 445; per l'attendibilità della testimonianza sestana, che privilegia l'origine caldea rispetto a quella egiziana difesa invece dallo scoliasta ai *Fenomeni* di Arato (v. 544), cf. E. Liénard, 'La mélothésie zodiacale dans l'antiquité', *RUB*, 39 (1934) 471-85; si veda infine l'utile presentazione "sinottica" di testi in Bezza 1995, 722-31;

8. ai §§ 24-6 la descrizione del metodo proporzionale e del relativo espediente meccanico delle anfore, cui ricorrevano 'gli antichi' per dividere il cerchio zodiacale, tramite il calcolo del transito e della posizione di determinate stelle, metodo sottoposto a critica nei successivi §§ 75 ss. e i cui limiti ammette e tenta di superare lo stesso Tolomeo (cf. ad es. *Tetr.* III 3); molto critico nei confronti del resoconto sestano, che non meriterebbe credito alcuno, è invece van der Waerden 1953, 220; la testimonianza sestana può essere utilmente confrontata con e integrata da altri luoghi, fra cui vale la pena ricordare un passo del commento di Macrobio al *Somnium Scipionis*, che attribuisce esplicitamente il medesimo metodo agli antenati degli Egiziani (*Aegyptiorum enim retro maiores...*: cfr. I 21, 9ss., sp. 12-22).

All'interno della sezione dedicata ai pianeti meritano una menzione, almeno fuggevole, i seguenti punti:

1. la registrazione di opinioni diverse sul potere benefico, malefico o 'comune' (ἐπίκοινος, *hapax* in Sesto e su cui cf. anche Val. *Anth.* II 1, nonché Ptol. *Tetr.* I 7, 1; 21; 25; IV 6, 1) dei pianeti, un'idea che tuttavia "è nella gnosi e non appartiene ai fondamenti teorici dell'astrologia classica (...), essa ha avuto i suoi primi critici in Plotino fra i Greci e in Agostino fra i cristiani", come ricorda Bezza (1992, 83, con ricchi rinvii testuali); nella presentazione sestana cf. in particolare: a. il § 29, da accostare forse a Ptol. *Tetr.* I 5, dove la partizione è tuttavia più completa, comprendendo anche i

due luminari (Luna = benefica, Sole = comune, in ogni caso ricordati anche in *M. V* 31); b. il § 30, che nega valore assoluto al carattere benefico o malefico di astri (e luminari) e lo lega piuttosto alle relative posizioni astrali da loro occupate (domicilii, esaltazioni, confini, 'doriforia', configurazione o 'sguardo' reciproco, presenza nei rispettivi 'centri'); tale distinzione, come conferma il successivo § 32, richiama la dottrina delle fazioni o αἰρέσεις, fondata sul ruolo primario assegnato alla luce e dunque in particolare ai due 'luminari', per cui si veda soprattutto la testimonianza di Ptol. *Tetr.* I 7 (con il commento dettagliato di Bezza 1992, 95 ss.); di Firmico Materno (II 20,11) e di Retorio (*CCAG* I 146);

1.1 gli ἄλλοι che sostengono (b) sono forse gli stessi che teorizzano (§ 31) una vera e propria gerarchia fra i pianeti; essi paragonano, sulla scia della tradizione egizia (cf. anche Plu. *Is.* 354F-355A e 371E), il sole al re e all'occhio destro, la luna alla regina e all'occhio sinistro (per questi accostamenti cf. anche Val. *Anth.* I 1, p. 1, 5 e 17 Pingree, nonché i testi ricordati in Funghi-Decleva Caizzi 1999, 602), i restanti cinque pianeti alle 'guardie' o assistenti reali, le altre stelle fisse al popolo (si noti comunque che la pre-eccellenza dei luminari viene accolta anche da Tolomeo, il quale dichiara esplicitamente — cf. *Alm.* IX 1 — di seguire l'ordine caldeo; si veda anche Paul. *Al.* 3 e 6);

2. l'elenco dei domicilii dei vari pianeti (§ 34), che segue l'ordine offerto da Firmico (II 2,3-5), ma già consacrato soprattutto nella trattazione di Tolomeo (*Tetr.* I 18), non quello del tutto personale di Manilio (II 434-47), né quello 'babilonese' cui accenna ancora Firmico (II 3,6); si noti inoltre come l'ordine in cui vengono elencati i pianeti (qui e al successivo § 36: i due 'luminari' all'inizio e poi la sequenza Saturno/Giove/Marte/Venere/Mercurio) sia quello normalmente usato nei papiri astrologici fino alla metà del II sec. d.C.: cfr. Neugebauer-van Hoesen 1959, 163-5 per ulteriori dati e commenti su questa e altre modalità di ordinamento planetario;

3. all'interno della dottrina delle elevazioni e depressioni planetarie (esposte nello stesso ordine attestato anche da Firm. II 3, 5), l'indicazione al § 36 dello ὕψωμα del sole al 19° grado dell'Ariete è in accordo con una tradizione confluita in molti autori "astrologici", fra gli altri Vettio Valente, Firmico, Paolo Alessandrino, Efestione (per gli opportuni rinvii testuali cf. Feraboli 1985, 391; per l'accordo in proposito anche dei "moderni" cf. Bezza 1992, 329) e ignorata invece, verosimilmente perché priva di solide basi astronomiche, da Tolomeo, per cui cf. *Tetr.* I 20 e le osservazioni di Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 196-7 n. 3;

4. la fedele registrazione al § 37 di una διαφωρία in merito alla dislocazione dei 'confini' (cf. Neugebauer-van Hoesen 1959, 12), entro cui i pianeti esercitano la massima δύναμις (cf. anche Paul. *Al.* 3), fra la tradizione astrologica egizia (divenuta quasi una *vulgata*: per i rinvii testuali cf. Manilio 1996, 349) e quella caldea; tale contrapposizione è attestata anche da Tolomeo (cf. *Tetr.* I 21 e Feraboli 1985, 391-4), il quale non solo è l'unico a riportare dettagli e relativa tavola del sistema caldeo, ma propone anche una terza soluzione, una sorta di mediazione fra i due metodi;

5. l'associazione dei pianeti, diversa da quella "non matematizzante" proposta da Manilio (II 466-642) e vicina forse all'esposizione di Firmico (II 22), secondo il loro reciproco ἐπιβλέπειν (§§ 33 e 39) e συμφωνεῖν (§§ 32 e

39), ovvero secondo i loro 'aspetti' (cf. al riguardo soprattutto Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 165-79 e Bezza 1992, 255ss.);

5.1 fra le 'configurazioni' Sesto menziona esplicitamente qui solo trigoni e quadrati (§§ 39-40, da confrontare con Cic. *Div.* II 89, in cui tuttavia non solo l'esposizione è più succinta, ma appare anche diversa da quella sestana: cf. *supra* n. 13), con i loro tradizionali influssi rispettivamente benefici e malefici (cf. § 40, nonché Firm. II 22, 4 e 6), omettendo diametro (che egli pure conosce: cf. *M.* V 10-1, 13, 16-7, 36) ed esagono, un silenzio, quest'ultimo, su cui cf. Bouché-Leclercq 1899, 167 n. 1.

Un discorso a sé meriterebbero comunque non solo questa, ma soprattutto altre "omissioni" di Sesto, il quale tace di elementi — ad es., solo per ricordarne alcuni: la *sphaera barbarica*, il tema del mondo, i decani, i κλῆποι, la dottrina delle καταρχαί — che rappresentavano i cardini della cosiddetta astrologia neoegizia, centrali in quella sorta di *vulgata* astrologica attestata soprattutto da Firmico Materno, ma sottaciuti o palesemente ignorati da Tolomeo.

Si noti infine che quello che Sesto attacca nei §§ 41-2 è un modo di predizione 'arcaico' già per Tolomeo: cf. *Tetr.* III 2, 5 e sulla questione Bezza 1995, 25-6. Questa osservazione dovrebbe indurre a supporre che i Caldei qui presi di mira da Sesto siano non 'astrologi di ogni tempo e paese', *pace* Feraboli (1985, 419), quanto piuttosto i soli *veteres*. In ogni caso, resta il fatto che, pur non menzionando esplicitamente le dottrine dei *novi*, primo fra tutti Tolomeo, il cenno di Sesto al metodo di previsione più adatto (§ 42) sembra richiamare la corretta prassi astrologica più volte difesa dallo stesso Tolomeo. Secondo quest'ultimo, infatti, come scrive Bezza (1992, 240), "l'astrologo prudente deve unire l'immagine al segno e da questa unione nasce una terza natura per giusta mescolanza, κατὰ σύγκρασιν, *ex contemplatione*, e questa *terza natura* potrebbe essere ben definita con il termine ζώδιον, *signum*, giacché, in verità, questa è l'accezione nell'esperto dell'arte".

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THE BEGINNINGS OF THE END: PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA AND HELLENISTIC THEOLOGY

DAVID T. RUNIA

1. *Some Doxographical Formulations*

In the first book of Aëtius' *Placita* dealing with the first principles of physical reality, two chapters are devoted to the subject of the gods (or God): I 6 Πόθεν ἔννοιαν ἔσχον θεῶν ἄνθρωποι ('From where did humans obtain a conception of the gods'), and I 7 Τίς ὁ θεός ('Who is God'). A similar division of the subject of theology is found in Sextus Empiricus *Adv. Math.* IX 48: first the sceptic treats πῶς ὁ πρότερον νόησιν θεῶν ἔσχον ἄνθρωποι ('How humans of former times obtained knowledge of the gods'), then περὶ τοῦ εἰ ἔστι θεοί ('On the subject whether gods exist'). Sextus points out why the epistemological question precedes the ontological (§49). Not everything that is mentally conceived actually exists. The gods that theology deals with may in fact have no real extra-mental existence. The two authors begin their treatment of the second question with a similar diaeresis, Aëtius implicitly with the division between 'some who deny that the gods exist' and a long list of philosophers who state positively what God or the divine is, Sextus explicitly with the fuller division of those who assert that God exists, those who assert that he does not, and the third group who say that he exists 'no more' than he does not (cf. also Cicero, *De natura deorum* I 2). The doxographer, taking his cue from the scientific method advocated by Aristotle, poses the question εἰ ἔστιν (whether it exists), before proceeding to the question τί ἔστιν (what it is). The sceptic Sextus, by way of contrast, does not get any further than the former question and ends with his customary suspension of judgment.¹

In the positive part of his chapter on Τίς ὁ θεός, to judge by the remaining evidence in Ps.Plutarch and Stobaeus,² Aëtius gives some

¹ On the *diaereses* involved see my detailed analysis on Aëtius' passage on the atheist position in *Plac.* 1.7 in Runia 1996, esp. 553. For the Aristotelian background (esp. *Anal. Post.* B 1, 89b31-35) see 552 and Mansfeld 1990, 3193ff.; 1992a, 70-76, 86ff.

² Ps.Plutarch I 7 881D-882A, Stobaeus *Ecl.* I 1.29b; see the reconstruction made

24 *doxai* on the divine nature. It is apparent that he or his source have combined at least two traditions, for in the majority of *doxai* a single answer is given to the question, indicating the nature of the highest god or God *par excellence*, but in about 6 *doxai* mainly grouped together at the end of the chapter a more complex theology is given.³ As an illustration we may take the report on Plato's theology:⁴

Πλάτων δὲ τὸ ἓν, τὸ μονοφυὲς καὶ αὐτοφυὲς, τὸ μοναδικόν, τὸ ὄντως ὄν, **τάγαθόν**. πάντα δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ὀνομάτων εἰς τὸν **νοῦν** σπεύδει. νοῦς οὖν ὁ θεός, χωριστὸν εἶδος, τὸ δὲ χωριστὸν ἀκούεσθαι τὸ ἀμιγὲς πάσης ὕλης καὶ μηδενὶ τῶν σωματικῶν συμπεπλεγμένον, μηδὲ **τῷ παθητῷ** τῆς φύσεως συμπαθές. τούτου δὲ **πατρὸς καὶ ποιητοῦ** τὰ ἄλλα θεῖα ἔκγονα νοητὰ μὲν, **ὃ τε νοητὸς λεγόμενος κόσμος** (καὶ αἱ **ἰδέαι**), **παράδειγμα**τα δ' εἰσὶ τῷ ὁρατοῦ κόσμου, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἐναιθέριοι τινες **δυνάμεις** (**λόγοι** δ' εἰσὶν ἀσώματα) καὶ (ἔμπυροι καὶ) ἐναέριοι καὶ ἔνυδροι, αἰσθητὰ δὲ τοῦ πρώτου θεοῦ ἔκγονα ἥλιος, σελήνη, ἀστέρες, γῆ καὶ ὁ περιέχων πάντα κόσμος.

1 Σωκράτης καὶ Πλάτων P | καὶ αὐτοφυὲς om. S | 3 τὸ ἀμιγὲς πάσης ὕλης καὶ μηδενὶ παθητῷ συμπεπλεγμένον contraxit P | 4 τούτου δὲ ... κόσμος deficit in P | 6 καὶ αἱ ἰδέαι conj. Usener | 7 ἔμπυροι καὶ conj. Wachsmuth | 8 αἰσθητὰ δὲ emend. Canter, αἰσθητὸς ὁ mss.

Plato affirms that God is the One, the single-natured and the self-natured, the monadic, true Being, the Good. All such names refer to the intellect. God therefore is intellect, a separate form. 'Separate' should be understood as meaning what is unmixed with any matter whatsoever and not entwined with anything corporeal, and also not sharing any passivity together with the passive aspect of nature. Of this father and maker the other divine beings are offspring. Some are intelligible, the so-called intelligible cosmos <and the ideas>. These are paradigms of the visible cosmos. In addition to these there are aetherial powers (these are incorporeal rational principles) and powers which are fiery and airy and watery. The visible offspring of the first God, however, are the sun, moon, stars, earth, and the cosmos which contains all things.

by Diels 1879, 301–307.

³ The doxographies of Empedocles, Xenocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Stoa, Epicurus, to which might be added Thales earlier in the chapter. The combination of sources is revealed by the double treatment of the Stoics as individuals and as school. The longer reports more closely resemble the famous theological doxography in Cicero and Philodemus, in which the plurality of gods proposed by various philosophers is exploited for polemical purposes; see Cicero *ND* I 25–41, Philodemus *PHerc* 1428. Diels' overview (1879, 531–550) is now badly outdated, but a complete superior text of the papyrus has not yet been published; cf. Henrichs 1972 and 1974; Obbink 1996, 80, 88–99.

⁴ Text based on Stobaeus at Wachsmuth 1884, 37, Ps.Plutarch at Lachenaud 1993, 88.

I have cited this text in full not only because it illustrates Aëtius' method, but also because it shows important resemblances to Philo's theology in *Opif.* 7–25 (indicated by the terms highlighted in bold). We shall return to it at various stages in the paper.

If Hellenistic philosophy is taken in a chronologically narrow sense (i.e. from Alexander to Actium),⁵ then both Aëtius and Sextus fall outside its scope.⁶ Yet to my mind their reports on theology excellently illustrate the characteristic of Hellenistic philosophy on which I wish to concentrate in my paper. Both of them are confident and direct in their approach to the question of the divine nature: either we can state what God is, or we deny his existence, or we conclude that no certainty can be gained on the subject of his existence (and *a fortiori* of his nature). In Hellenistic philosophy Stoics and Epicureans argue with confidence about the nature of God (or the gods), Academics and sceptics are no less direct in showing the weaknesses of the arguments and the evidence on which their premisses are based.⁷ It helps that Hellenistic theology is generally materialistic and immanentist (though not literally encosmic in the case of the Epicureans), but this does not seem to me a necessary condition for the above-mentioned directness of their theological epistemology. The above-cited Aëtian passage, though of course only a report, may be taken as an illustration. Plato's highest god, formulated in terms of an identification of the One/Good and the Demiurge from the *Timaeus*, is presented (with help from Aristotelian theology) as a separate and transcendent form, in no way entwined with matter. But this separateness is not taken to have any consequences for his knowability, as *might* have been deduced from Plato's famous statement at *Tim.* 28c, to which the doxographer alludes with the terms 'father and maker'.⁸

⁵ The scope of the new *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* is even narrower, from 300 to 100 BCE; see Algra *et al.* 1999.

⁶ On the chronology of Aëtius see Mansfeld–Runia 1996, 320–323, who date him, not very dogmatically, to about 50–100 CE. Bremmer 1998 has raised a difficulty with regard to the name, which seems to be virtually unknown until late antiquity. This does not, however, affect the dating of the Aëtian *Placita* as a document (since what's in a name?).

⁷ For a valuable overview of Hellenistic theology see Mansfeld 1999, on knowledge of God esp. 469–478, and also specifically in relation to scepticism Long 1990. For the philosophical foundations of Hellenistic theology the study of Schofield 1980 is particularly valuable.

⁸ Note, however that strictly speaking Plato does not say that he is unknowable *per se*, but that he is difficult to discover and communicate. See further at n. 96 below. Dörrie 1957, 199 calls Aëtius' definition 'ganz ungenügend', but does not say why. Is it because there is no reference to the World-soul?

Another interesting feature of this text is the polyonymy applied directly to the first god: the first five names, all indicating formal characteristics, are used to describe the highest Nous. Aëtius and Sextus maintain the tradition of Hellenistic theology, not only because the main sources of their material were Hellenistic, but also because they continue the epistemological *Anliegen* characteristic of that theology.

2. Enter Philo of Alexandria

The studious and well-informed Jewish exegete and philosopher Philo of Alexandria is well acquainted with the above-mentioned doxographical formulations. The first of the five ‘doctrines of piety’ which he presents as a summary at the end of *De opificio mundi* (§170) concerns the existence of God, to be affirmed against atheists who are divided into those who doubt God’s existence and those who deny it altogether.⁹ This statement presupposes the same *diaeresis* given by Cicero, Aëtius and Sextus. Among the philosophical questions to which mankind attains through the gift of sight and the contemplation of the cosmos (the *topos* based on Plato, *Tim.* 47a-c) are problems of theology.¹⁰ The understanding embarks on investigation (σκέψις), and if it determines that the cosmos has come into being, it asks further (*De Abrahamo* 163):

ὑπὸ τίνοος γέγονε καὶ τίς ὁ δημιουργὸς κατ’ οὐσίαν ἢ ποιότητα καὶ τί διανοηθεὶς ἐποίει καὶ τί νῦν πράττει καὶ τίς αὐτῷ διαγωγὴ καὶ βίος ...

who was the cause of its coming into being, and what was the essence or qualified nature of its demiurge, and what were his thoughts in creating it, and what is he doing now, and what is his occupation and way of life...

This formulation, though assuming the creationism of the *Timaeus*, fits in well with the confident approach of Hellenistic philosophy postulated above.¹¹ In another text, however, which uses a similar

⁹ A rather similar formulation is found at *Praem.* 40; see below §4(f). For the abbreviations of Philonic treatises used in this paper see Runia 1986, xi and the Notes to contributors in the volumes of *The Studia Philonica Annual*.

¹⁰ The *topos* is found in many Philonic texts, cf. Runia 1986, 270–276. In some of them Philo uses potted summaries of main questions that can be related to the doxographical tradition.

¹¹ On similar formulations in Cicero, see below §4(e).

formulation (*De posteritate Caini* 168), the approach differs. When God says to Moses, 'See, see that I am (*Deut.* 32:39)', this does not mean 'see me', which is impossible, but rather: see that I exist. It is sufficient for human reasoning to learn that the cause of the universe exists. To try to advance further and enquire about his οὐσία ἢ ποιότης (essence or qualified nature) is primitive folly. Note that this view is clearly not the same as the sceptical position, because no doubts are expressed concerning God's existence.

In the last text I wish to cite, Philo once again uses the method of *diaeresis* which is so characteristic of the doxographical method. The trigger this time is the pronouncement of Jacob at Bethel, 'how dreadful is this place' (*Gen.* 28:17). Philo cannot resist making a play on words (*De somniis* 1.184):

ὄντως γὰρ τῶν ἐν φυσιολογίᾳ τόπος ἀργαλεώτατος, ἐν ᾧ ζητεῖται, ποῦ καὶ εἰ συνόλως ἐν τινι τὸ ὄν, τῶν μὲν λεγόντων, ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ὑφεστὼς χώραν τινὰ κατείληφε, καὶ ἄλλων ἄλλην ἀπονεμόντων, ἢ ἐντὸς τοῦ κόσμου ἢ ἐκτὸς αὐτοῦ μετακόσμιόν τινα, τῶν δὲ φασκόντων, ὅτι οὐδενὶ τῶν ἐν γενέσει τὸ ἀγέννητον ὅμοιον, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ὅλοις ὑπερβάλλον, ὥς καὶ τὴν ὠκυδρομωτάτην διάνοιαν ὑστερίζουσιν μακρῶ τῆς καταλήψεως ὁμολογεῖν ἡττώσθαι.

For truly of the subjects of natural philosophy this is the most difficult, when investigation is made as to where the Existent Being is and whether It is located in anything at all. Some assert that everything that subsists has occupied a place and assign differing locations to It, either within the cosmos or in some metacosmic place outside it. Others affirm that the Uncreated is unlike any of the beings subject to becoming, but rather totally transcends them, so that even the swiftest understanding falls well short of obtaining knowledge of It and acknowledges its failure.

The question is: where is God located, if indeed he is located anywhere?¹² Either he occupies a place in physical reality, whether immanently in the cosmos (Stoics) or in between the cosmoi (Epicureans), or he transcends it, so that the mind, portrayed Hellenistically as zipping through the universe with the utmost speed,¹³ fails in its quest for knowledge. The term for God here, it may be noted, is τὸ

¹² This question is not found as such in the Aëtian doxography, but is very much consistent with its method. As Mansfeld has shown (1992a, 92–93), frequent use is made of the Aristotelian categories in outlining the doxography's subject (essence or nature, size, shape, disposition, location etc.). The method is especially prominent in book II on the heavens.

¹³ Cf. Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, in contrast to the *Phaedrus* myth, in which mind proceeds *beyond* the confines of the cosmos and contemplates the ideas or God.

ὅν, which of course is Platonic, but is frequently used by Philo, together with the personalized alternative ὁ ὅν, for the God of the Bible.

3. *Philo's Theology: Subject and method of this paper*

Like Aëtius and Sextus, Philo too has to fall outside the scope of Hellenistic philosophy if taken in the narrow chronological sense. It is very unlikely that he was already alive when Augustus victoriously entered the cowed city of Alexandria in 30 BCE, accompanied by his friend, the Stoic philosopher Arius.¹⁴ We make this distinction because we are convinced that there was a distinct difference between philosophy in the Hellenistic and in the imperial age. Various criteria are used for purposes of demarcation. One could mention the fates of the schools in Athens, the revival of Platonism and Aristotelianism, the rise of eclecticism, the turn to exegesis of classical authors and texts, and so on. These are all primarily formal criteria. But one might also wish to consider questions of philosophical substance, and here I am going to argue that Philo's evidence in the area of theology has a definite contribution to make. I am delighted, therefore, that he has been given another chance to show what he can contribute to our understanding of Hellenistic philosophy,¹⁵ even if on this occasion the focus has to be on the first intimations of its demise.

The difficulties of using Philonic evidence for the history of philosophy are well-known. He is the only extant source of any consequence for the period between Cicero on the one hand and Seneca and Plutarch on the other.¹⁶ But Philo is not a Greek philosopher in the ordinary sense. He is a Jew loyal to the traditions of his people, who spends most of his creative energy commenting on the holy books of Moses. This specific religious background cannot but exert its influence, certainly in the area of theology. Every historian of philosophy who wishes to exploit Philo's evidence thus needs to cope with what we might call 'the problem of the double unknown'. When you assess a Philonic doctrine, you have to determine not only its

¹⁴ Philo is best dated from ± 15 BCE to 50 CE (he lived at least until the reign of Claudius).

¹⁵ Cf. the contribution of C. Lévy 1992 in the Proceedings of an earlier Symposium Hellenisticum.

¹⁶ Dillon 1996, 438f. staunchly defends his decision to devote a chapter to Philo in an account of Middle Platonism.

relation to contemporary philosophical views, but also the extent to which it reveals Jewish traits that go beyond the literal starting-point in the biblical text. But in both cases there is a dearth of comparative evidence. On the Greek side we have only the tiniest scraps, while in Jewish studies too Philo is virtually *sui generis*.¹⁷ It would be like trying to tease Middle Platonism out of Clement and Origen and Neoplatonism out of Augustine if all the writings of 2nd and 3rd century Platonism, including Plotinus, were unavailable.

Roberto Radice once pointed out that Philo is used by scholars as his own source. Ideas are located in his works, attributed to others and thus taken to demonstrate his own non-originality.¹⁸ Now I do not think that Radice has been able to prove his case beyond all doubt that Philo acted as a catalyst in the development of the Platonist tradition. But his remark does shed light on the problem of the double unknown that scholars have to face in practice, and of which they are not seldom insufficiently aware.

But there are further difficulties involved in using Philo's evidence. There is the sheer quantity of material (some 2700 pages in all), and also the notorious fact that Philo's statements on a given subject are not always, on the surface at least, consistent with each other. I have made my own position on the latter problem clear enough in earlier publications. I believe that Philo has a clear rationale for what he is doing.¹⁹ In his commentaries he takes the scriptural text as starting-point, to which he as commentator is subordinate. The exegetical context thus determines the perspective from which he employs philosophical doctrines.²⁰ If grand attempts are made to make a synthesis of all these passages, the perspective from which they are written soon becomes lost, and the results cannot fail to be unsatisfactory.²¹

But perhaps this rationale is still not enough to account for the *démarche* of Philo's writings and the *déconfiture* of his interpreters. It is worth pointing out that scholars have succeeded in determining the

¹⁷ The only solid material is the much earlier Aristobulus, and the Wisdom of Solomon, both of whom differ from Philo quite considerably.

¹⁸ Radice 1991, 128; cf. 1989.

¹⁹ See esp. the method of my dissertation, 1986; also the remarks at 1988a, 70–72.

²⁰ This certainly need not preclude a measure of coherence, but it is not Philo's first aim. See the Dillon's sound remarks (1995, 110).

²¹ The tremendous intellectual challenge of Wolfson's remarkable study (1947), was to bring the whole of Philo into complete consistency. The method and the results convinced no one.

internal organization of the *corpus Philonicum*, plainly centred around three independent series of commentaries, but that they have not been able to determine the relative chronology of these works.²² For this reason any kind of application of a genetic approach, which has had some (admittedly limited) success in the case of other large ancient corpora such as those of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus, is doomed to failure. Nevertheless I am becoming more and more convinced that we should take this situation into account when analysing Philo's writings, i.e. that it is sound methodology first to work within the framework of the separate commentaries before mixing together results from all three (and the remaining treatises as well). It is reasonable to expect that the internal doctrinal consistency of these large-scale works will be greater than that of the corpus as a whole. If Philo even then apparently cannot achieve a measure of coherence, then either we still do not understand him, or he is a lost cause.

In this paper, therefore, I will limit the main body of my evidence to three texts in Philo's grand commentary usually known as the Exposition of the Law. The aim of this series of ten writings is to explain the divine Law in all its manifestations, from the creation of the cosmos to its embodiment in the Mosaic legislation.²³ The law has

²² The organization of the Philonic corpus was definitively established by the chief editor of the great critical edition, L. Cohn (1899). The best modern account is given in Morris 1987. On the problems of chronology see Nikiprowetzky 1977, 192–202. The scholar who is most confident about the possibility of establishing a chronology for Philo's works is A. Terian; see his remarks at 1984, 292–294, also 1997, 32–36.

²³ The treatises are (Roman numbers in brackets indicate the location in the Loeb Classical Library edition of Colson and Whitaker): *De opificio mundi* (I), *De Abrahamo*, *De Iosepho* (VI), *De Decalogo*, *De specialibus legibus* books 1, 2, 3 (VII), 4, *De virtutibus*, *De praemiis et poenis* (VIII). They are interconnected with each other by means of transitional passages. From *Abr.* 1 it is clear that *Opif.* belongs to this work, and not to the Allegorical Commentary. From the beginning of *De Iosepho* it may be deduced that the lives of the patriarchs Isaac and Jacob have been lost. There is also a substantial lacuna in the final treatise. If the famous passage at the beginning of *Spec.* 3 refers to the troubles of 37–40 CE, then the work will belong to the later period of Philo's life. There can be no doubt that the contents of the series is less esoteric than that of the Allegorical Commentary. The amount of allegorization is limited. Nevertheless it is a mistake to think that the intended audience was exclusively gentile, as argued by Goodenough and others. Philo addressed an educated public of both Jews and pagans, as befits his situation in Alexandria. On this work in its entirety see now Borgen 1996 and 1997, 63–79. This special focus on the Exposition of the Law means that I will not be referring very much to *Aet.* and *Prov.*, Philo's most Hellenistic works. Though containing a good deal of theology, that are for the most part not so interesting for the specific themes I am investigating in this article; on this material cf. further Mansfeld, 1999, 466ff.

a divine origin, and it conducts humankind to a life in accordance with the divine will and nature (we recognize the theme of becoming like God, ὁμοίωσις θεῷ, as the *telos*). Plainly the Exposition of the Law is not a series of philosophical writings in the Greek tradition. Moreover, philosophical theology is by no means the main theme of the series. But at three points theology does assume centre stage, in the doctrine of creation (esp. *De opificio mundi* 7–25): in the exposition of the first two commandments of the Decalogue (esp. *De specialibus legibus* 1.32–50), and in the *visio Dei* given as reward to the patriarch Israel (*De praemiis* 36–46). These are the passages we shall be concentrating on.

My aim in this paper is to analyse the above-mentioned passages with a view to establishing the thesis that they inform us about a new direction in philosophical theology, in which the confident and direct epistemology of Hellenistic theology is seen to be giving way to a different approach which is less confident and more complex. After reaching a number of conclusions on the basis of an analysis of these passages, I shall turn my attention briefly to some non-Philonic texts for purposes of comparison. At the end of the paper I shall return to the difficult theme of the relation between Jewish and Greek thought in Philo and the repercussions for our subject.

4. *Some Philonic Theological Themes*

(a) *The basic division of reality*

Philo begins his exposition of the Mosaic creation account with a kind of brief philosophical *prolegomenon* (*Opif.* 7–12). Because it starts with an attack against those thinkers who regard the cosmos as ‘ungenerated and eternal’, it has generally been interpreted as an attack against Aristotle and Aristotelianizing Platonists who affirm the eternity of the cosmos.²⁴ In a recent discussion with Abraham Bos, however, I have come to the conclusion that this interpretation is both unnecessary and unlikely.²⁵ Not the createdness or eternity of the cosmos is the fundamental issue here, but the relation between God and the cosmos. Philo is at pains to outline, in a quite straightforward way, the basic components of reality (cf. §8 ἐν τοῖς οὐσι).

²⁴ E.g. Dillon 1996, 157, and also myself in 1986, 100.

²⁵ See Bos 1998.

These can be reduced to two, God as active *Nous* and passive matter as the substrate of physical reality (though the term for matter, ὕλη, is not used). The position that he opposes is reminiscent of what he elsewhere in allegorical terms calls Chaldeanism.²⁶ It is a philosophy which regards the cosmos as the prime reality or 'first god'.²⁷ Since it denies a higher extrinsic cause, Philo regards it as atheistic. It would be wrong to equate this doctrine with one particular philosophical school (e.g. Stoicism). Its chief feature is clearly a denial of anything that transcends physical reality and is purely intelligible (cf. *Abr.* 69, 'they ... had no conception of what was invisible and intelligible'). In other words, the Chaldeans accept the cosmos as an ordered (and divine) whole, without attributing its existence to a higher cause. It is not the same as a Stoic immanentist theology, because there is not even a single *logos* pervading and ordering all things. The cosmos and the internal sympathies of its parts are regarded as a law unto themselves. Divine providence is absent, and in some texts Chaldeanism comes close to be equated with a kind of astrological fatalism.²⁸

Despite appearances to the contrary Philo does not present a doctrine of two principles in §8–9. Although the distinction between active and passive recalls both Stoic and Aristotelian doctrine, it would be a mistake to read it in these terms.²⁹ A Platonist perspective comes closer to what Philo intends. Two early interpretations of the *Timaeus* — Theophrastus fr. 230 FHS&G = Simpl. in *Arist. phys.* 26.7–13, and Diog. Laert. III 69, 76 — speak of God and matter as the two *archai*, but they do not highlight the aspects of activity and passivity as Philo does so emphatically (this does occur more clearly in the Aëtian passage on Platonic theology cited above).³⁰ Philo's text in §8 can be read in two different ways, either as 'the activating cause and the passive cause' or as 'the activating cause and the passive object' (the word αἴτιον is not repeated). If we read it in the first way, there must be two principles. If we take the second reading, then there is only one true principle. I am convinced that the formulation is deliberate, and that Philo by not calling matter a cause wishes to deny

²⁶ I.e. what Abraham left behind when he recognized the true God; cf. esp. *Abr.* 60–88.

²⁷ See *Migr.* 178f., *Her.* 97, *Congr.* 49, *Abr.* 68ff., *Mut.* 16, *Somn.* 1.53, *QG* III 1.

²⁸ Notably in *Migr.* 178, 194, *Her.* 97, and cf. also *Her.* 300f. (the Amorites).

²⁹ Here I disagree with Bos 1998, 71, who regards it as primarily Aristotelian in emphasis.

³⁰ For texts affirming a Platonic doctrine of two principles see Baltes 1996, 152ff. and commentary, and also D. Sedley's paper elsewhere in this volume.

it any kind of autonomy of its own.³¹ There is nothing else to compete with the one God (cf. §171). Unfortunately this leaves the status of unformed matter rather up in the air. No answers to the question of the origin of matter are forthcoming in *Opif.* or in other treatises in the Exposition of the Law.³²

A second feature of Philo's formulation is a strong emphasis on the *transcendence* of the first cause. Although the phrases 'among the things that exist' (§8 ἐν τοῖς οὖσι) and 'the mind of the universe' (ὁ τῶν ὅλων νοῦς) might suggest a form of immanence à la Stoa, any such impression is immediately countered. God does not possess excellence or knowledge (as would be gained by contemplating the ideas), but is even superior to the ideas of the Good and the Beautiful (note the contrast with the Aëtian passage where the highest god *is* the Good). Philo's statement here can be compared with other passages in which God's absolute transcendence is affirmed. The most striking is at *Praem.* 40 (our third passage), in which God is described as ἀγαθοῦ κρείττον καὶ μονάδος πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἐνὸς εἰλικρινέστερον ('superior to the Good and more ancient than the Monad and more absolute than the One').³³ It is striking that in the *Opif.* passage the question of God's relation to the One and the monad is omitted, in spite of the fact that it was a hot topic in the Pythagoreanizing Platonism of his day.³⁴ The reason for this is context-immanent. There can be no doubt that God also transcends the monad (associated with the noetic world and thus the Logos in §15). At the same time, however, the unicity of God is a standard apologetic theme of Judaism which Philo wants to retain as one of the five chief lessons of the treatise (§171).

But not all the emphasis falls on God's transcendence. We note too that the doctrine of providence plays a crucial part in Philo's argument (§9–11). The Chaldean position amounts to a denial of providence, since the cosmos in their perspective is autonomous. A

³¹ See Runia 1986, 104. Note that some Platonists denied that ὕλη was a principle. See texts cited by Baltes 1996, 198ff. (but Clement stands closer to Philo).

³² See *Prov.* II 47–50. But I agree with May 1994, 9–21 that Philo does not confront the full philosophical implications of the position that God created the cosmos *ex nihilo*. His position may be described as a 'monarchic dualism'; cf. Runia 1986, 454, Reydam-Schils 1999, 155.

³³ Cf. also *Contempl.* 3, *Legat.* 5 (but these contexts are less philosophical).

³⁴ Note esp. the controversial position of Eudorus, on which see Theiler 1965, 207, Dillon 1996, 126–129, Baltes 1996, 174 and commentary, and the strong emphasis on God's monadic status in the Aëtian passage on Plato's theology cited above in §1.

very similar argument is found later in Atticus, directed at the Aristotelian position.³⁵ Philo thus establishes in his philosophical *prolegomenon* a kind of dialectic of separation from and involvement with the world. The affirmation of transcendence indicates a strict separation of God from everything connected with physical reality, yet at the same time he is its creator and maintainer. Philo's interpretation of 'day one' of creation will have to elucidate the nature of this separateness further.

(b) *The noetic cosmos and the extended image*

God, when wishing to create this visible cosmos, first struck out the noetic cosmos, so that he could use it as a model and so make the corporeal cosmos as fine a product as possible (*Opif.* 16). This preliminary creational event takes place on 'day one', a day that differs from all the others (§15). Philo's exegesis is radical because he subsumes the intelligible world under the heading of genesis, even if it is a genesis of a different kind than that which pertains to the visible world.³⁶ I take it that Philo knows what he is doing. Other ways of interpreting the first five verses of Genesis were within easy reach. Analysis of the extended image used in §17-18 shows that Philo at the very least wished to affirm the ontological dependency of the noetic cosmos, and perhaps also its contingency (but this is a matter of speculation).³⁷

Philo's passage is famous because it provides us with the first securely datable text that exploits the term and concept of the intelligible world (κόσμος νοητός). It is probable, however, that the two references in Aëtius and the mention of an ἰδανικὸς κόσμος in Timaeus Locrus are contemporary and may go back to sources anterior to Philo.³⁸ The addition of the word λεγόμενος in the Aëtian perhaps indicates a recognition that the term was an innovation, not

³⁵ Fr. 4.2 Des Places; cf. Theiler 1971, 27f., Runia 1986, 100f.

³⁶ An indication of the radical nature of Philo's position is the fact that of all the Church fathers only Clement is prepared to follow him; cf. *Str.* V 93-94.

³⁷ Wolfson is right to suggest that the noetic cosmos does not exhaust God's thought; cf. 1947, 1.210. But it is questionable whether this should be interpreted in terms of 'patterns of an infinite variety of possible worlds' (*ibid.*). Philo will surely have been attracted to the Platonic idea that there is but one best cosmos, and God will not think what is less than best.

³⁸ Aëtius I 7 (text cited above), II 6, Timaeus Locrus 30. On the latter text cf. Baltes 1972, 105f. He argues (p. 22) that this document shows affinities to what we know about Eudorus.

to be found in Plato's writings. The evidence in Aëtius is particularly interesting because he clearly subordinates the noetic cosmos to the transcendent first god. It is one of his divine offspring, whereby the term ἔκγονα implies some kind of genesis just as in Philo. But how this occurs and the location of the model are left entirely obscure. Just as in Philo, the subordination of the ideas to God seems more radical than in later Middle Platonist documents, in which the ideas are presented primarily as objects, and not as products, of divine thought.³⁹

In a separate piece of research I recently had occasion to trace the history of the term κόσμος νοητός.⁴⁰ I was quite surprised to find how sporadically it occurs in Middle Platonist documents. Philo and Plotinus use it frequently, but in between examples are scarce. The references in doxographical documents are valuable because they show that it was already in common currency in the 1st century CE, if not earlier. Analysis of the various passages show that it has a three-fold origin in Platonic thought. Most often the term is used in the context of cosmic genesis, equated with the model used in the process of demiurgic creation, as established in the *Timaeus*. But there is also an epistemological usage in which the noetic world indicates the objects of the mind's thought (derived from the divided line, *Rep.* 509d, cf. Philo *De somniis* 1.186-188, Alcinous *Did.* 4.8). Thirdly there are quite a few passages in which its usage is primarily ontological and inspired by the ascent of the gods and souls in the *Phaedrus* myth: the noetic cosmos represents that reality which is beyond the physical cosmos (cf. Philo *Opif.* 71, *Praem.* 37, Clement *Str.* IV 159.2), but which — in Philo's perspective at least — is made and ruled by God. This three-fold origin is relevant to the question of the contents of the noetic cosmos. Does it contain all the ideas, or is it rather a limited *Planwelt* containing only those ideas which are archetypes for cosmic entities?⁴¹ In light of the above findings I believe the former view is to be preferred. Otherwise Philo would have to posit two different noetic worlds, one for creation and one for intellectual contemplation, which seems otiose.⁴²

³⁹ Cf. the doxography at on Plato's doctrine of principles at I 3.21. Here the idea is described as οὐσία ἀσώματος ἐν τοῖς νοήμασι καὶ ταῖς φαντασίαις τοῦ θεοῦ. Baltes 1996, 393f. argues, perhaps rightly, that the formulation implies that God here is the world-soul.

⁴⁰ Runia 1999.

⁴¹ The latter was the suggestion of Horovitz 1900, 84-87.

⁴² Philo's language also supports this interpretation, e.g. the phrase τὸν δ' ἐκ

Against this background Philo's famous extended image in *Opif.* 17-18 can be read in two quite different ways. In a minimalist reading it serves only to give an answer to the question concerning the location of the noetic cosmos: this world has no physical place, and is also not found outside the cosmos, as in the *Phaedrus* myth, but has its location in the divine Logos. In a maximalist reading attention is also paid to the hierarchy of participants, the king, the architect and the builder. The image thus additionally offers a philosophical analysis of levels of divine activity. I am convinced that the latter reading corresponds to what Philo intended. The image is almost certainly inspired by accounts of the founding of his own city Alexandria.⁴³ On this famous event there were two traditions from which he could choose: either Alexander himself was pivotally involved in the city's planning, or he used the services of Dinocrates of Rhodes and other architects for that purpose. The image appears to have very deliberately chosen for the second tradition. If the minimalist reading was his intention, why did he not follow the simpler option of following the first view?⁴⁴

The most remarkable aspect of the passage is the apparent discrepancy between the image and its application. In the former the persons of the king and the architect and the roles of the king, architect and builder are very clearly distinguished. In the application, however, they appear to be coalesced together and all the roles are applied to God. The explanation for this move lies in Philo's use of the word θεός. God's most authentic name is Being, ὁ ὢν or τὸ ὄν.⁴⁵ The divine name θεός denotes God exclusively in his creative role. Being as He really is transcends all thought, because thought must take its cue either from the physical world (cf. *Somn.* 1.186ff.) or be engaged in contemplating the noetic world, both of which are created by God as θεός.⁴⁶

τῶν ἰδεῶν συνεστῶτα κόσμον at *Opif.* 17.

⁴³ The arguments in support of this view are set out at length in Runia (1989); on the image see further Runia 1986, 165ff.

⁴⁴ As in the presentation of the demiurgic creator as παμβασιλεὺς καὶ ἀριστοτέχνης in Atticus fr. 4.12.

⁴⁵ This is rather esoteric doctrine, mainly set out in Allegorical Commentary (esp. *Mut.* 10ff.); closest text in the Exposition of the Law is found in *Abr.* 51. A strong affirmation is found in the fragment *De Deo* §4, which was probably part of the Allegorical Commentary; see now Siegert 1998, 5 and commentary, based on Siegert 1988.

⁴⁶ *Praem.* 46 might appear to offer an exception to this rigour, but this is in fact not the case, as we shall see below in §4(f).

If this interpretation is correct, then the dialectic of separation and involvement noted earlier is taken a step further. The king is not only transcendent, but also remote. He supplies the necessary conditions for the foundation of the city, but is not directly involved. One might be tempted to translate this result in terms of a dialectic of contemplation and action, such as we find in Aristotle (and as is appropriated in Middle Platonism): the *Nous* is remote, engaged in his own concerns, the *Logos* carries out the labour. But this cannot be what Philo intends. The *Nous* is depicted in §8 as God the creator. The *Logos* is depicted in §20 and 24 as the location of the noetic cosmos presumably thought out by God as *Nous*. For this reason I speculated in my dissertation that Philo, by means of this image, aims to convey that God's creatorship does not exhaust the *fulness* of his Being, i.e. that his Being is transcendent and remains beyond the grasp of theoretical circumscription.⁴⁷ Remoteness, therefore, does not entail dissociation, except in conceptual analysis, which divides what cannot actually be divided.

(c) *The Logos*

There is no need, in the present context, to plunge headlong into the problematics of Philo's doctrine of the *Logos*. Just two brief observations should be made.

Firstly, in cosmological terms the prime difficulty is that Philo tries to develop a basically Platonist view of creation without allowing any room for a world-soul.⁴⁸ Despite his great versatility, it would have been awkward to impose this doctrine on the text of Genesis. In his account of Philo's thought John Dillon suggests the following interpretation. Through the influence of the *Logos* the Ideas become *logoi spermatikoi* and serve as models and creative principles of the physical cosmos. The *Logos* is only the sum-total of the Ideas in activity, as the intelligible cosmos was their sum-total at rest.⁴⁹ This interpretation is reached by conflating the account in *Opif.* with other Philonic texts.⁵⁰ The interpretation of the ideas as spermatik principles would introduce a pronounced Stoicizing element into Philo's thought which I

⁴⁷ Runia 1986, 167f.

⁴⁸ Also lacking in the Aëtian doxography in I 7 cited above (but present in II 6).

⁴⁹ Dillon 1996, 159f.; cf. also Reydam-Schils 1995.

⁵⁰ Dillon admits that the ideas are never called *spermatikoi logoi* (*Legat.* 55 is not to the point). He in fact overlooks the best text for his thesis, *QE* II 68, where the *Logos* is called *σπερματικὴ οὐσία*.

do not find convincing. In *Opif.* itself the transference of the paradigmatic aspect of the ideas to matter is clearly the task of the divine powers (see next sub-section). I am persuaded that both the Logos as the divine thinking and the noetic cosmos as paradigm must be regarded as transcending the physical world (hence the 'creation' of the noetic world precedes that of the corporeal cosmos).

Secondly, it should be noted that the Logos is Philo's most general concept for that aspect of the divine that stands in relation to created reality. As a term it is more comprehensive than the divine powers and the divine names.⁵¹ It straddles the distinction between divine transcendence and divine immanence. In *Opif.* the former application prevails, while the immanent role of the Logos is reserved for the powers. Elsewhere this can differ, for example in the famous case of the Logos-cutter (*Quis heres* 133–236). Philo may well have been not discontented with the variability of his various theological schemes, which often depend on the exegetical context. In the case of the Logos the epistemological aspect is clearly more important than the cosmological. Humankind is related to God and can know Him through the Logos-side of his activity. This is inherent in the way humans have been created, for, as we read in §25, humankind is an εἰκὼν of the Logos as God's εἰκὼν. The Logos is God's image, not because he is an inferior entity separate from God,⁵² but because he does not represent God in his fulness.⁵³

(d) *The reception of the divine powers*

The introduction of the doctrine of the divine powers for the first time at *Opif.* 20 is rather abrupt.⁵⁴ Philo has just declared that the

⁵¹ Cf. esp. the sevenfold theological scheme set out in *QE* II 68.

⁵² As can be the case, notoriously at *Conf.* 146 (cf. 63), which was greatly exploited by later Christian theologians. Philo also speaks about angels as *logoi* (which is reminiscent of the *daimones* called as such in the Aëtian doxography cited in §1).

⁵³ It is therefore quite misguided to postulate, as Wolfson 1947, 1.231 does, a higher level of transcendent Logos which is equivalent to God's mind, containing the ideas as objects of His thinking and thus identical with the essence of God. God's thinking can only be known as it is directed towards the world, and that is precisely what the Logos represents. Wolfson's super-Logos is just a figment of systematization. It has to be admitted, on the other hand, that the relation between the Nous in §8 and the Logos in §20 and 24 is made insufficiently clear. God as Nous only reappears at §69, where an equivalence with the Logos appears to be assumed.

⁵⁴ Philo does mention the 'powers' of God as maker and father at *Opif.* 7, but I

Logos is the place of the noetic cosmos, when he adds that no other place would be sufficient to receive and contain even one of God's powers in an unmixed state, and then goes to focus on the role of the creative power (§21). It appears that he is assuming familiarity with the doctrine of the powers that is frequently developed elsewhere in his writings, and especially with the association of the divine name θεός with the creative power that gives expression to God's goodness in creating the cosmos.⁵⁵ After discussing the theme of divine goodness with obvious reference to Plato's *Timaeus* in §21–22, he then explains in §23 how physical reality would collapse if the force of the divine goodness was not *tempered* by means of a process of *measurement* and *adjustment* (the task of the Logos whom Philo elsewhere calls the 'measurer').⁵⁶

It seems to me that this passage is theologically and metaphysically of great interest. The difference between the active principle and the passive recipient as postulated in §8 is not just a matter of *separation* (bridged by God's creative activity), but also of *power*. Power involves two aspects. In the first place it is the capacity to bring about an effect, i.e. in the case of a rational being, to carry out what it has decided to do (βούλησις). But power is also indicative of ontological superiority, whereby the active cause has to accommodate the application of its power to the nature of what it affects. A surfeit of unaccommodated power cannot be contained or absorbed by the recipient and would lead to inevitable collapse.

Do we have precedents for this perspective on *dynamis* in philosophy prior to Philo? Willy Theiler was undoubtedly justified in saying that for Plato and Aristotle *Gestalt* (i.e. purposeful structure) and not power was foremost in their thinking.⁵⁷ But various texts in Plato do emphasize the power of the working of the ideas (*Soph.* 247e4, *Tim.* 28a8)⁵⁸ and of the demiurge (*Tim.* 41c5, cf. *Soph.* 265b9).

do not think this is an allusion to the doctrine of the powers.

⁵⁵ On the doctrine of the powers see e.g. Wolfson 1947, 1.235–239 (with reference to numerous texts), Dillon 1996, 161–163.

⁵⁶ On the Logos and the ideas in relation to measurement see texts cited in Runia 1986, 138. The ideas are called εἶδη καὶ μέτρα at *Opif.* 130. It should also be noted that there is a double use of the term *dynamis* in §23. It also indicates the *ability* to absorb what is inflicted on it by someone or something else.

⁵⁷ Theiler 1957, 75: 'Für Platon und Aristoteles steht zweckhafte Gestalt, nicht Kraft in der Vordergrund.'

⁵⁸ Also implicit in the chaotic movement of the unformed receptacle which is probably the result of undergoing the *dynamis* of the ideas; cf. Scheffel 1977, 27, 102ff. (with reference to *Tim.* 28a8, 52e2).

Above all the idea of the Good is dazzling in its power (*Rep.* 509b9), just like the sun, but in the end the philosopher *can* see it (517c1). The importance of the role that the divine *dynamis* plays in Stoic theology is well known, but it is clearly power that is adjusted to its ordering task in material reality, as seen in the various levels at which it operates.⁵⁹ In many respects the most intriguing text is found in the Ps.Aristotelian *De mundo*, in which a distinction is made between the supreme god's οὐσία (being or essence) and his δύνάμις (§6, 397b19ff.). God does not act directly on physical reality himself, but effectuates his sovereignty via his power, which is experienced most by what is closest to him, and much less by what is further away. The idea of adaptation is perhaps implicitly present here, but not in such a way that there is threat of an overdose. Everything seems wonderfully well adapted as things are (there is no doctrine of creation). We shall return to this important text later on.⁶⁰ After Philo we have to make a jump to Neoplatonist authors. For Plotinus the One is an ἄπειρος δύνάμις that flows over to the hypostases that proceed from it.⁶¹ The realm of intelligible being too is universal and infinite δύνάμις.⁶² In more general terms Proclus posits (*El. theol.* 150) that 'any processive term in the divine orders is incapable of receiving all the potencies of its producer...; the prior principles possess certain powers which transcend their inferiors and are incomprehensible to those that follow them'.⁶³

An important parallel text in the Allegorical Commentary, *Quod Deus immutabilis sit* 77–81, shows that Philo has above all two analogies or images in mind when he explores the theme of the adjustment or measurement of divine power, the mixing of wine with water (with a subtle exegesis of *Ps.* 74:9) and the tempering of light through the atmosphere (with reference to Plato's theory of vision in *Tim.* 45). In both cases dilution and diminution allow the force of the respective power to be withstood. And, as we shall see directly, such tempering occurs not only in the context of creation, as in the text above, but it

⁵⁹ E.g. Diog. Laert. VII 147, Sext. Emp. *Adv. Phys.* I 75, and the fourfold working of δύνάμις and πνεῦμα at Philo *Leg.* II 22, *Deus* 35ff. (= *SVF* II 458).

⁶⁰ Where the controversial issues of authorship and dating will be discussed; see below §6.

⁶¹ *Enn.* VI 9.5.36 and 6.10.

⁶² *Enn.* V 8.9.23ff.; cf. Proclus *El. theol.* 84–86.

⁶³ Translation Dodds (modified). This text is appositely cited by Winston-Dillon 1983, 317 in a comment on *Deus* 78.

is no less required in anthropological and epistemological contexts, when humankind goes in quest of knowledge of the First cause.⁶⁴

(e) *Existence and essence*

In the passage *Opif.* 7–25 the theme of knowledge is touched on only tangentially and indirectly, though it is certainly present. This alters in a later treatise of the Exposition when Philo gives an exposition of the first commandment. Strictly speaking the subject is God's sovereignty (*Spec.* 1.12), but Philo allows himself a digression on how knowledge of God is to be gained (§32–50), for knowledge of Him-who-IS is considered to be the goal of well-being (εὐδαιμονία, §345, the final words of the treatise).

Philo starts off rather coyly. The 'father and leader of all' is hard to guess at (δυστόπαστος) and hard to comprehend (δυσκατάληπτος) (§32). This statement cannot but remind the attentive reader of Plato's famous statement about the demiurge at *Tim.* 28c4.⁶⁵ Then a distinction is made between knowledge of God's existence (ὑπαρξίς answering the question εἴ ἔστι ὁ θεός) and knowledge of God's being or essence (οὐσία answering the question τί ἔστι ὁ θεός κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν). The first question is easy to solve via natural theology. The second is not only difficult (χαλεπὸν) but perhaps impossible (ἀδύνατον, §32). Such is in fact the case, for it was not even granted to the great Moses when he explicitly implored God to give him an answer on the mountain (Exodus 33, cf. §41ff.). Characteristically Philo does not explain exactly what he understands by οὐσία here, but we may confidently take him to mean God (who is Being *par excellence*) as he really is, i.e. as he is known to himself. This knowledge is inaccessible to humankind.

It is apparent that the two questions that Philo concentrates on in this and other similar passages⁶⁶ are indirectly related to the doxographical passages which we discussed at the outset of our paper. The *diaeresis* between sceptics and positive theologians runs parallel to the

⁶⁴ Parallel texts involving measurement and adjustment are found at *Somn.* 1.143, *Virt.* 203

⁶⁵ Cf. Früchtel 1968, 156, Runia 1986, 112.

⁶⁶ Cf. esp. *Leg.* III 97–100, *Post.* 13, 168, *Praem.* 40ff., and see the list at Theiler 1964, 395f. Festugière 1954, 6–17 gives an analysis of the distinction between existence and essence and concludes that it is a 'thème philosophique banal'. I disagree. Given the central importance of the distinction in later philosophy the thesis is *a priori* unlikely; cf. Aertsen 1988, 20ff.

procedure of first asking whether God exists, and in the case of a positive answer, then posing the question of his nature. In at least four well-known Ciceronian texts a kind of short cut is taken. The first question scarcely needs to be posed.

ND I 65: concedo [Cotta] esse deos; doce me igitur unde sint, ubi sint, quales sint corpore animo vita. ('I concede that the gods exist; teach me, then, where they come from, where they are, of what nature they are in body, mind and way of life.')

ND II 3: omnino dividunt nostri [Stoici] totam istam de dis immortalibus quaestionem in partes quattuor; primum docent esse deos, deinde quales sint... ('In general terms our school divides the entire topic of the immortal gods in four parts; first they teach that the gods exist, then what their nature is ...')

ND II 12–13: itaque inter omnes omnium gentium summa constat; omnibus enim innatum est et in animo quasi insculptum esse deos. quales sint varium est, esse nemo negat. ('And so among all the people of all nations there is agreement on the chief issue; for in all people there is an innate conviction and it is as it were engraved on their minds that the gods exist. As their nature there is disagreement, but no one denies their existence.')

Tusc. Disp. I 36: sed ut deos esse natura opinamur quales sint ratione cognoscimus, sic ... ('But just as it is by nature that we believe that the gods exist and by reason that we know what their nature is, so...')

The details on how Cicero and his sources think that knowledge of God is obtained does not concern us here. What is important is the similarities to and differences from Philo. As in Philo, the question of God's existence is primary and obtains virtually universal consent. The question of God's nature (not essence) comes second, and in no case does Cicero express doubt on the possibility of gaining that knowledge. In many cases there is a variety of views on the subject. This is grist for the sceptics' mill, of course, but of a quite different order to Philo's denial that God's *ousia* and its metaphysical underpinnings can be known.

Why is clear knowledge — we note that the characteristic terms of Hellenistic epistemology are prominent: ἐναργής φαντασία §40, κατάληψις §44 — of God's essence inaccessible to humankind? It is striking that the words placed in God's mouth in order to explain this rather precisely echo the theme of measured appropriation in *Opif.* 23:

I graciously bestow what is appropriate to the recipient. For not all that I can easily give is within man's power to receive. For this reason I extend to him who is worthy of grace all the gifts that he is able to receive. But comprehension of me is not such that the nature of man

or even the entire heaven and cosmos will be able to contain (χωρήσαι). Know yourself, then ... (*Spec.* 1.43–44).⁶⁷

The problem is that full knowledge of who God is cannot be received by the powers of human intellect. It would be overwhelmed, as happens to those high-flyers who ascend to the heavens and find their eyesight darkened by the brightness of the celestial light (§37).⁶⁸ Human beings thus have to know themselves.⁶⁹ This means: know that they are different to God, that God and humans are on different sides of the basic division of reality set out in *Opif.* 8. The epistemological assumption is that like is known to like. But God and man are unlike. God acts and bestows, man receives and reacts. In the case of man's creation too, God's power had to be measured out. Philo adapts both basic anthropological texts in the creation account to this purpose. For example in *Virt.* 203 Gen. 2:7 is made to say that 'God inbreathed as much of his own power as mortal nature was able to receive'. Alluding to Gen. 1:26–27 he states that 'the invisible deity' stamped on the invisible soul its own markings (τύποι), so that not even the earthly region should be deprived of an image of God (*Det.* 86), achieved through the mediation of the Logos, according to whose image man has been created.⁷⁰

But Philo takes two further steps in our passage. Not only God himself, but also his powers are unknowable in their essence (ἀκατάληπτοι κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, *Spec.* 1.46). This might seem surprising. If the Logos and the powers represent 'the face of God turned towards creation',⁷¹ why should they too remain beyond human reach. The answer emerges clearly from a parallel passage on mixture at *Deus* 77. God's powers are unmixed with respect to himself, but have to be tempered so that created mortal nature can accommodate them.

⁶⁷ Here too there are many parallel texts: e.g. *Post.* 143, *Deus* 80, *Her.* 33, *Mut.* 218, 230ff., *Abr.* 203, *Praem.* 39 etc. Note also that the term χωρήσαι is exactly the same as in *Opif.* 23.

⁶⁸ The use of the term μαρμαρυγαί for blinding light is taken from Plato *Rep.* 515c9, 518a8. Clearly those texts have suggested an interpretation of the images of the sun and the cave in terms of the unknowability of the Good equated with the highest Deity. This is not to say that that was Plato's own intention. Obviously the viewer is overwhelmed, but in the end the Good can be seen, if with difficulty (μόγις ὁράσθαι, 517c1). See further below n. 93.

⁶⁹ On the extensive appropriation of the Delphic oracle in Philo see Courcelle 1975, 1.39ff.

⁷⁰ On Philo's anthropology and the relation between God and man see my analysis in Runia 1988b, and also Sellin 1992, who, however, in my view goes too far in allowing the human nous to *become* the Logos of God (cf. esp. 32).

⁷¹ The lovely formulation of Winston 1985, 50; cf. also Runia 1995.

Because of the need for this tempering they too cannot be contemplated in the fullness of their power. But Philo adds a complication by equating the divine powers to the ideas (§47–48), which acting in the manner of seals, bring form to created reality.⁷² The consequence that the ideas too are unknowable in their essence undermines the philosophical coherence of the concept of the intelligible world as object of contemplation, for being the object of knowledge is the very *raison d'être* of the ideal world. We must suspect that, as the comparison with our inadequate knowledge of the nature of the heavenly bodies in §39 suggests, Philo is giving in to a sceptical strain in his thought, which here appears also to be applied to the intelligible realm.⁷³ It thus cuts across the Platonist division between intelligible and sense-perceptible things. Philo wishes to emphasize, we may surmise, that there are limits to the extent that man can peer into the mind of God in his creative labour.

(f) *A superior path to knowledge*

Finally a few brief words on a later passage in the Exposition, in which Jacob receives as reward for his goodness the name Israel, which Philo (dubiously) takes to mean 'he who sees God' (*Praem.* 36–46). Philo sets out here a superior path to 'clear comprehension of God's existence' (§45). The knowledge that God exists is not inferred from the effects of his activity in physical reality, but is gained 'through himself alone'. Philo gives a few analogies to suggest how this might occur (especially by means of light), but does not make exactly clear how this knowledge is gained. David Winston has suggested that it takes place through an 'inner intuitive illumination constituting a rational process of the analytical type'.⁷⁴ We cannot pursue this question further now. What I want to draw attention to is that Philo in §41–44 sets out a *diaeresis* on the question of knowledge of God which is in fact an elaboration of the standard division which

⁷² Bormann 1955, 38 criticizes Philo for separating the Forms from the thoughts of God. I think the argument can be rescued if it is borne in mind that the ideas are the formal aspect and the powers the dynamic aspect of God's working. The ideas can be compared to seals because they do not change. They do not in fact enter into matter and become immanent.

⁷³ See esp. Nikiprowetzky 1977, 183ff. Philo's position should be re-examined in the light of Opsomer's research into the continuation of the Academic tradition in Middle Platonism (see 1998).

⁷⁴ Winston 1981, 28, comparing it with the later ontological proofs for God's existence.

we discussed earlier in §1. The atheists and agnostics come first, then those who accept God's existence out of habit rather than as the result of thought. Fourth are those who advance from the cosmos to God, and fifth those who follow the higher path outlined above. But even this last highly privileged category does not advance beyond knowledge of God's existence, namely ὅτι ἔστιν (§44). The question of God's essential nature (οἷός ἐστιν ὁ θεός) remains out of reach (*ibid.*). A little earlier Philo had used the familiar image of bedazzling light and he repeats the theme that we already observed earlier in *Opif.* 23 and *Spec.* 1.44: God in his goodness grants to humankind, in this case Israel, what it is possible for created and mortal nature to receive and contain. The key term again is χωρῆσαι, indicating what it is possible to accommodate and absorb without suffering an overdose.

5. *Provisional Conclusion*

We have seen that Philo, in presenting the theme of human knowledge of God, takes his cue from the standard questions of Hellenistic theology as formulated in the diaereses preserved in doxographical texts. In Hellenistic theology this led to positive *or* negative theology in a direct sense, positive when God's existence was affirmed and statements were made about his nature, negative when God's existence was denied or doubts were cast on it (in which case his nature was *hors de question*). In Philo this confident and direct theology has undergone alteration. Philo is both positive about the question of God's existence (only a fool or a wicked person would wish to deny it) *and* negative about the possibility that knowledge can be gained of his true nature. This alteration, I submit, is symptomatic of the end of Hellenistic theology.

In the analysis of key Philonic texts the philosophical reasons behind Philo's altered approach emerged. Between God the creator as active cause and material reality as recipient there is an ontological divide. Creatorship does not exhaust the fulness of the divine Being. God is remote (the distant king in the image), but at the same time committed to the world through his Logos. Because of the overwhelming superiority of his powers, God's beneficence has to be tempered in accordance with the capacity of the recipient. This also applies to the area of human knowledge. It is not possible for man to

see God as he really is. He is incomprehensible (ἀκατάληπτος), unnameable (ἀκατονόμαστος), unspeakable (ἄρρητος). This is negative theology in the sense that it is affirmed that God *transcends* human knowledge, denomination and description.⁷⁵ If humans should nevertheless make the search and the object of their quest were granted, they would collapse from an overdose of Being, for their nature is unable to receive and contain its full force. This is the philosophical basis of what may be called Philo's mystical theology, which centres not on union with or direct apprehension of God, but on the unending quest to reach him.⁷⁶

It will be apparent that in the previous two paragraphs the notion of negative theology is used in two quite different ways. In the case of Hellenistic theology, negative theology involves resolute denial. In the case of Philo it does not mean that God's existence is denied, but that its essential nature can be cognitively attained. The difference between the two is crucial to my argument.

6. *Some Parallel Views*

Before I reach some conclusions on Philo's value as a witness for the history of philosophical theology, I should perhaps elucidate what I take its scope to be. By 'the end of Hellenistic theology' I do not mean to say that Philo's evidence marks off the end of an epoch. That is far from being the case. As we already seen⁷⁷ and will soon see again, Hellenistic theology continues well after Philo's lifetime. All I wish to argue is that the intimations of its demise are visible in Philo, and that for this reason he is an interesting witness in the history of ideas. Very briefly in this section I shall illustrate my thesis with some parallels in other document prior and posterior to Philo. It goes without saying that these cannot be presented in any detail. I can only sketch some details that might encourage a more comprehensive examination.

⁷⁵ Philo's negative theology is not systematically developed, but it is certainly more than a method of getting rid of standard anthropomorphisms, as suggested by Mortley 1986, 155. A definitive account is still a *desideratum*, in spite of the study of Montes-Peral 1987. On Philo's doctrine of God's unnameability see Runia 1988a.

⁷⁶ Philo shows clear mystical tendencies, but I hesitate to describe him as a mystic in the full sense, as Winston 1985, 43–55 is inclined to do (though hedging his bets on whether he records personal experience). Philo's approach is taken further by Gregory of Nyssa.

⁷⁷ In the examples of Aëtius and Sextus Empiricus discussed in §1.

The document of Hellenistic theology that is the most important test-case for our thesis, in my view, is the Ps.Aristotelian *De mundo* already mentioned above in connection with the Philonic doctrine of the powers. Both authorship and dating have given rise to much controversy.⁷⁸ My own position is that it is certainly inauthentic, but may well be earlier than generally thought, perhaps as early as 200 BCE.⁷⁹ Both questions are not vital to my thesis. I would argue that this work, despite the similarities to Philo mentioned earlier,⁸⁰ remains an example of Hellenistic theology. The author wishes to theologize (θεολογῶμεν, 391b4) in presenting his survey of the cosmos. As David Furley has pointed out, following the lead of Festugière, this is very typical of his approach.⁸¹ He is not attempting to give a scientific account of the universe, but works his way towards an explanation of its features in theological terms. The author recognizes his limitations. His theologizing is qualified with the words καθ' ὅσον ἐφικτόν (to the extent attainable, i.e. for a human person). But we should look first and foremost at how he speaks about the highest god. There can be doubt that he places a strong emphasis on his transcendence. He is established on the loftiest crest and is invisible, just like the Great King of Persia. Nevertheless I would argue that there is not a trace of epistemological doubt in speaking about his nature. The distinction between God's power and his being or essence in chapter 6 (397b19) is in no way connected with epistemological doubts or limitations (and thus despite superficial resemblances is quite different to Philo's distinction between existence and essence). The kingship of the supreme god is much more directly focussed on the cosmos than is the case in Philo.⁸² The final chapter too supports

⁷⁸ Until quite recently there was a general consensus that the work was pseudonymous, but this has in recent years been untiringly contested by G. Reale and A. P. Bos; see now their collaborative work (1995).

⁷⁹ Arguments for this view can be derived from linguistic evidence (cf. Schenkeveld 1991) and certain resemblances to Theophrastean theology and cosmology.

⁸⁰ See above §4(d). Long ago Bernays 1885 suggested that the Alexander to which the work is addressed was Philo's nephew, and Pohlenz 1940, 480ff. also showed some sympathy for the view that its *Sitz im Leben* was Hellenistic Judaism. It cannot be doubted that there are some affinities between this work and Philo's doctrine of the powers (and its antecedents in Hellenistic-Judaism); see the monograph of Radice 1994 and the critique of Winston 1996. It do not think it can be proven that Philo knew the work, but it is not unlikely. See also Riedweg 1993, 90 and n. 272, who emphasizes the parallelism with Aristobulus.

⁸¹ Furley 1955, 334.

⁸² For this reason Festugière was quite right to discuss this work under the subtitle *Le Dieu cosmique*; cf. (1949) 460–518. The decision to place Philo in the same volume is less happy (520–585). Part of the account actually falls under the theme

our reading. A long list of names for God is given in the best tradition of Hellenistic theology (compare the lists in the Stoic doxography at Diog. Laert. VII 136, 147). To be sure, these describe his effects (401a13), but it is nowhere implied, let alone stated, that he is nameless in his essence. Even if the work were to be given a very late date, i.e. contemporary or later than Philo,⁸³ I would still argue that it is a representative of Hellenistic theology.

Most Hellenistic theology, of course, is convinced that divinity in its various forms is material and immanently present in the cosmos (or, in the case of the Epicureans between the *cosmoi*). The conviction that divinity can be known in its essential nature continues to be held during the Imperial period by later thinkers belonging to the *haireseis* which are a continuation of the Hellenistic schools. For example, in a diatribe on the Good, the Stoic Epictetus asks (II 8.1): 'what is the true nature (οὐσία) of God. It is not flesh or land or reputation, but mind, knowledge, right reason.' This is not a profound text, but its matter-of-fact approach is indicative. A particularly interesting case is Seneca, the Roman contemporary of Philo. In most respects Seneca remains attached to a relatively orthodox Stoicism. The incursion of Platonist ideas in his writings has been much exaggerated.⁸⁴ There is, however, an interesting text that might be taken to illustrate our thesis. In diverse passages of his *Naturales Quaestiones* Seneca appears to breathe the optimism of Stoic theology. For example, in the Preface to Book I we read that he is grateful to nature when he has penetrated its mysteries and learns what the material of the universe is, who its originator and custodian is, what God is, and so on (*Praef.* 3). Having contemplated the heavens, the human mind begins to know God. What is God? The mind of the universe, all that you see and do not see, entirely reason (§13–14). There is, however, at least one passage that is rather more pessimistic. Book VII deals with the subject of comets. The knowledge we can gain of these is more obscure than the case of the five planets (§25).

of the later volume, *Le Dieu inconnu et la gnose*. Festugière's interpretation of Philo has been harshly criticized; cf. Nikiprowetzky 1977, 7, 237.

⁸³ A very late date is argued for by Donini 1982, 215, who assumes Platonist influence. Cf. also Mansfeld 1992b, 399ff., who argues (n. 61), that the reference to Plato in the final lines is reminiscent of late Hellenistic philo-Platonist tendencies.

⁸⁴ For example by Donini 1979, who speaks 'l'ecclettismo impossibile', and to a lesser extent Gersh 1986, 155–180 (who concentrates mainly on the two Platonist letters). I am indebted on the subject of Seneca's theology to an excellent honours thesis prepared by my student ms. F. Limburg.

Seneca answers that there are many things which we concede to exist, but of whose nature we are ignorant (the same distinction the doxographers and Philo make). The example he gives is the nature of the human mind, a much used doxographical and sceptical example.⁸⁵ In the case of God it must be conceded that he can be seen by thought only (§30.3). Many things related to him are obscure. Seneca then goes a step further (§30.4):

quid sit hoc sine quo nihil est scire non possumus, et miramur si quos igniculos parum novimus, cum maxima pars mundi, deus, lateat!

(What this [highest divinity] is, without which nothing exists, we cannot know, and we are surprised if we have too little knowledge of little bits of fire [i.e. comets], when the greatest part of the cosmos, God, remains hidden.)

As so often, the precise import of the passage is a bit elusive. As the following words reveal, Seneca does believe in the progress of knowledge. Much will be revealed, if we focus our attention on philosophy. But will such progress reveal all? The final words of the Book are not so hopeful.⁸⁶ The truth lies hidden at a great depth. *A fortiori* this applies to the case of the highest god. The point made here is perhaps not merely rhetorical.⁸⁷

For a third document I turn to the text-book of Middle Platonism par excellence, the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinous. Much has been written on the extent to which negative theology is present in this work. How close is this Platonist to what we found earlier in Philo? The crucial passages are found in Chapter 10. It begins with an adaptation of *Tim.* 28c in which God as principle is said to be 'all but ineffable' (§10.1). As John Dillon remarks,⁸⁸ this must not be taken as saying that God is 'ineffable tout court'. But what then is the relation between the positive statements that are made in §10.2–3 and the negative theology in §10.4. Dillon interprets as follows:⁸⁹ "To this extent, none of the previous epithets constitutes a definition of God's

⁸⁵ Cf. Philo *Somn.* 1.30–32 and the exhaustive analysis of this theme in Mansfeld 1990; this particular passage is discussed on p. 3140.

⁸⁶ Although this passage comes at the end of the entire work, as published in most editions and translations until recently, the original order was probably different. See the article of B. Inwood elsewhere in this volume, and the new edition of Hine. As F. Limburg has pointed out to me, in the new order the pessimistic Book VII is followed by the optimistic preface to Book I!

⁸⁷ But see further the discussion of the passage by B. Inwood at p. 143–7.

⁸⁸ Dillon 1993, 101.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 107f.

nature; they are simply labels, indicating at the most his powers, or his relations with the world, but otherwise just serving to 'name' or identify him...". Such an interpretation brings Alcinous in striking proximity to Philo, but it may not be correct. Pierluigi Donini had earlier drawn attention to the fact that Alcinous explicitly states that God is ineffable (ἄρρητος) and graspable by the intellect only (νῶ μόνῳ ληπτός).⁹⁰ The three ways of gaining knowledge all lead to an intuitive knowledge (νόησις) of God's being, which, however, cannot be articulated in human language. Moreover a number of the epithets applied to God are not causal in nature and so do not denote his relations with the world. Here we thus have positive *and* negative theology, similar to what we found in Philo, but not quite the same. Alcinous is more optimistic: the intellect can gain an intuition of what God is, and apparently is not overwhelmed. But he is still, I would argue, far removed from the confidence and directness of Hellenistic theology. Alcinous does not reveal the anthropological basis of this high intuition. Later in the treatise, when discussing the Platonist goal of 'assimilation to God', he states that God must be taken to refer to the god *in* the heavens, not the god *beyond* them (§28.3). The first god is remote, as in Philo, but not quite as unattainable.

7. *Philo, Witness or Innovator?*

The argument in this paper has been that Philonic texts present us with evidence pointing to the end of Hellenistic theology. The confidence of Hellenistic philosophers that, if we know that the gods exist, it is also possible to describe their nature and give them their rightful place in a philosophical system becomes undermined by the conviction that God (or the highest god) to which we aspire in our search for knowledge of the ultimate principle is beyond easy access, possessing an essence of being that cannot be fully expressed in language and may well be beyond human knowledge.

This conclusion is based primarily on Philonic texts. Earlier in this paper (§3) it was argued that Philo is a difficult source to use. He is a vital witness for developments in the history of philosophy that took place in his vicinity, but at the same time he himself is not a Greek philosopher in the usual sense. What does this mean for the value of

⁹⁰ Donini 1988, esp. 118ff.

our conclusion in historical terms. The dilemma can be simply stated: is Philo a witness or an innovator?

It may be argued that the basic philosophical position that Philo reads into the Mosaic text is Platonist (though not Platonic).⁹¹ There are good grounds for thinking that in the generation before Philo a Pythagorean/Platonist revival got underway, associated especially with the figure of Eudorus of Alexandria.⁹² Philo, therefore, is a witness to current developments. Although we have no explicit testimony to negative theology in the case of Eudorus, it might be presumed as a consequence of his postulation of a supreme god (ὁ ὑπεράνω θεός) beyond the Monad and the Dyad (cf. perhaps Philo *Praem.* 40).⁹³ But is there any hard evidence? Festugière rightly pointed to the fact that in the little doxography at *Somn.* 1.184 cited above (§2) the position that God is transcendent and defies human comprehension is attributed to anonymous thinkers, presumably adepts of Greek philosophy comparable to the Stoics and Epicureans alluded to for the opposite opinion.⁹⁴ Of course we cannot be sure that the last consecutive clause was not added by Philo himself.

Another clue might be found in the fact that Philo at *Spec.* 1.32 (discussed above in §4(e)) makes a clear allusion to *Tim.* 28c, which, as we know, was a decisive proof-text in the entire discussion about the nature and knowability of God.⁹⁵ But Philo does not refer to other thinkers here, and so could have made the connection between Moses and Plato himself. Long ago Henry Chadwick pointed out that this text appears to be interpreted in terms of negative theology in Cicero *ND* 1.30:⁹⁶

Iam de Platonis inconstantia longum est dicere, qui in Timaeo patrem huius mundi nominari neget posse, in Legum autem libris quid sit omnino deus anquiri oportere non censeat.

⁹¹ There is no true negative theology in the Platonist sense in Plato, though it can easily be read into his writings. This even applies to the images of the sun and the cave in the *Republic*. The person who leaves the cave is able to study the sun and contemplate its nature (οἷός ἐστιν). On the Good, often identified later with Plato's highest god (e.g. in Aëtius, cited above in §1), as not beyond being see the conclusive arguments of Baltes 1997.

⁹² Cf. Theiler 1965 and 1971, Dillon 1996, 115–135.

⁹³ Dillon 1996, 127f., Tobin 1983, 14f.

⁹⁴ In his appendix to 1954, 307, in response to Wolfson's claim that Philo was the originator of the doctrine of the unknowability of God.

⁹⁵ See Runia 1986, 111.

⁹⁶ Review of Wolfson's *Philo* in *CQ* 63 (1948), 24–25; cf. nn. 94 and 98.

At this point one can speak at length about Platon's inconsistency. In the *Timaeus* he says that the father of this world cannot be named, but in the books of the *Laws* he does not think one should inquire about God's nature at all.

This is more than half a century before Philo. But to my mind the passage must be considered suspect. The Epicurean spokesman is trying to convict Plato of contradictory statements. It is more likely that he is giving tendentious interpretations of two Platonic texts than that he is recording views held by contemporary Platonists.⁹⁷

On the other hand there is the view of Wolfson — which has found little favour among scholars — that the doctrine of the unknowability of God was derived by Philo from the Bible and through his influence passed into later Greek philosophy.⁹⁸ In support of this position it may be noted that negative theology in its strongest form, i.e. statements unequivocally affirming the unknowability of God, are rare in the period before Plotinus. They are in fact largely confined to Christian and Gnostic authors.⁹⁹ The first clear case in Greek philosophy that I know of is found in Numenius.¹⁰⁰ It would indeed be difficult to deny that biblical theology exerted influence on Philo's thought in this area. The text of Exodus 33, which forms the basis for the negative theology of *Spec.* 1.32–50 and other passages, is no doubt one of the strongest texts. The fact that man cannot see God's face and remain alive (v. 20) can be taken to entail the unknowability of God's true being. When this is combined with the depiction of God's splendour (δόξα, *kavod* in the rabbinic tradition) which Moses can only see from the rear, it strongly suggests the conception of divine power that must be accommodated in order to be received by human-kind. We might compare a contemporary document from Hellenistic Judaism, a fragment from the (Jewish) Sibylline Oracles:¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ The allusion to the *Laws* is made to say the exact opposite to what Plato intended; cf. 821a and the comments of Pease *ad loc.*

⁹⁸ Wolfson 1947, 2.126ff. We may also compare the earlier conclusion of Theiler 1930, 142 that the denial of the possibility of knowledge of God was 'selbstverständlich eigentümlich philonisch'. But Theiler want to dissociate Philo from the Greek philosophical tradition, not have him play a decisive role in its development.

⁹⁹ The evidence is collected in Lilla 1971, 212ff., but the analysis is unsatisfactory, since it fails to discriminate between Platonic texts and their reception.

¹⁰⁰ Fr. 17 Des Places: τὸν πρῶτον νοῦν ... παντάπασιν ἀγνούμενον (the first Nous is completely unknown). I pass over the famous passage attributed to Moderatus in which the One is beyond being and essence because the negative theology is not explicit; cf. Dodds 1928, Dillon 1996, 347.

¹⁰¹ Text in Theophilus *Ad Aut.* II 36; see Grant 1970, 88, whose translation I quote. Cited by Winston and Dillon 1983, 317 *ad Deum* 78.

God is one, who alone rules, immense, uncreated,
 Almighty invisible, alone himself seeing all,
 Himself yet not viewed by any mortal flesh.
 For what flesh can see with eyes the heavenly
 And true immortal God, who dwells in heaven?
 Not even against the sun's rays
 Can men stand, born to be mortal,
 Men who dwell in bones and are veins and flesh.

But what strikes us with full force here is precisely the philosophical naïveté of the passage. It requires a philosophical mind to convert the topos of divine invisibility into negative theology.¹⁰² Philo was fully capable of this and in the context of Jewish thought he may well have been an innovator.¹⁰³ Philo converts the motif of divine majesty and power into a doctrine in which the passive recipient (whether cosmic or human) will collapse if it tries to contain or receive a higher metaphysical power which has not been properly adjusted and measured out. As we saw above,¹⁰⁴ this doctrine appears to anticipate the notion of *dynamis* in later Platonism, where a not entirely dissimilar amalgam of philosophical and religious conceptions is encountered. What is distinctive in Philo's presentation, as far as I can tell, is the counterfactual threat of collapse. This may well have a Jewish background.

The difficulty, as always, is that there is no direct unequivocal evidence that Philo's work entered the mainstream of Greek philosophical discussion. It is true that Numenius may well have been acquainted with his works, but the historical plausibility that the strong doctrine of God's unknowability entered Greek philosophy *exclusively* via Philo and Numenius cannot be considered very great.¹⁰⁵ I would prefer the following solution to our dilemma. Philo stands at the interface of Hellenistic and later Greek philosophy, looking (from our perspective) both back and forward. He has the status of an outsider. The inspiration that he found in biblical thought made him sensitive to changes that were in the air, e.g. in the case of

¹⁰² This is my objection to the passages in Xenophon (*Mem.* IV 13.4) and Ps.Xenophon (ap. Stob. *Ecl.* I 15.5 Wachsmuth) to which Festugière 1954, 12–16 attaches so much importance. They are philosophically naïve.

¹⁰³ Though it should not never be forgotten that Philo is working within a kind of scholastic context in Alexandrian Judaism. The text at Josephus *C. Apionem* II 167, in which God is stated to be knowable in his power but unknown in his essence, is probably derived from Philo, with whom Josephus was well-acquainted.

¹⁰⁴ See above §4(d).

¹⁰⁵ I examined this question in my article of 1991, concentrating on the conception of God as ἐστώς (standing) in Numenius and Plotinus.

negative theology. As I have argued elsewhere,¹⁰⁶ the texts in which Philo points forward to later developments are the ones that are most interesting.

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¹⁰⁶ In Runia 2000, 379.

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